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Paul's Campaigns

By

David James Burrell, D.D., LL.D.

Author of "The Apostles' Creed," "We Would See
Jesus," "The Old-Time Religion," "At the
Gate Beautiful," "The Cloister
Book," etc., etc.



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CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
INTRODUCTION	v
FOREWORD	vii
I. SAUL OF TARSUS	1
II. THE SUMMONS	3
III. THE RENDEZVOUS	5
IV. THE FIRST JOURNEY. <i>Chart</i>	10
V. AT ANTIOCH IN PISIDIA	14
VI. IN THE MOUNTAINS OF LYCAONIA	18
VII. THE RETURN	24
A PARENTHESIS	28
VIII. THE SECOND JOURNEY. <i>Chart</i>	35
IX. ON TO EUROPE	39
X. AT THESSALONICA	44
XI. AT BERCEA	48
XII. AT ATHENS	53
XIII. AT CORINTH	59
XIV. THE THIRD JOURNEY. <i>Chart</i>	65
XV. A BUSY YEAR	71
XVI. AT MILETUS	77
XVII. BOUND FOR JERUSALEM	83
XVIII. AT CÆSAREA	92
XIX. PAUL'S LAST VOYAGE. <i>Chart</i>	101
XX. AT ROME	107

INTRODUCTION

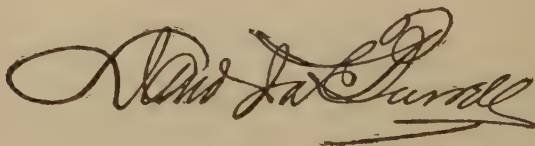
This little book is written in the hope of bringing order out of the confusion which prevails in the minds of many Bible students as to the Journeys of Paul.

In a frontier town in the West, sixty odd years ago, a Sunday School class of boys was required to commit to memory the "Acts of the Apostles." Their teacher was John Bally, a carpenter by trade, who found it easy enough to interest his pupils until they reached the Journeys of Paul, where, in the labyrinth of crossings by land and tackings by sea, they were, like Milton's fallen angels, "in wandering mazes lost."

There is something to be said for this old-fashioned way of lodging the Scriptures in the youthful mind,—seven verses a Sunday for a blue ticket, seven blues for a red, seven reds for a yellow and seven yellows for a Testament with the Superintendent's name

on the fly leaf. The pride of that day! Of course we wondered what was the use of memorizing such a verse, for example, as this: "There arose a tempestuous wind called Euroclydon; and when the ship was caught and could not bear up into the wind we let her drive": but many a time in the passing of the years that same remembered verse has helped me. What better can one do indeed, when tossed about by contrary winds, than to cast out the tackling, undergird the ship with prayers and promises and "let her drive"?

The writer, who was one of John Bally's boys, ventures the hope that the following pages may inspire a deeper confidence in the profitableness of all Scripture "for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness."

A handwritten signature in dark ink, reading "David J. Purcell". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a prominent loop at the beginning and a long, sweeping underline.

FOREWORD

ACTS 1:1-9

The opening words of the Acts of the Apostles are singularly significant: "*The former treatise* (i. e. The Gospel according to Luke) *I made, O Theophilus, concerning all that Jesus began both to do and to teach.*" By this we are given to understand that our Lord's earthly ministry of thirty years was only the beginning of a campaign of doing and teaching which must continue until every knee shall bow before him.

What then did the dying Saviour mean when he cried, "It is finished!"

Not that all sinners were saved. The paying of the ransom on Golgotha made all alike salvable; but they had yet to be informed of the Good News and "constrained to come in."

Not that the Kingdom of Heaven was established on earth. The foundation was now laid and cemented with blood: but the

PAUL'S CAMPAIGNS

superstructure had yet to be reared upon it.

Not that Christ had so fully completed his work that nothing remained for his disciples to do. On the contrary, a long campaign was before them, "as laborers together" with him.

This was the particular reason why Jesus returned after his resurrection and remained with them forty days. He wished to mark out the Plan of the Campaign which they and their successors were to pursue for the evangelization of the world.

The keynote was struck in the word "Go" which rings through the record of the forty days.

But the disciples were loath to go. They remained in and about Jerusalem for at least five years, until persecution drove them out. At the stoning of Stephen "they that were scattered abroad went everywhere preaching the word." Had they taken Christ at his word in the first instance that tragedy might have been unnecessary. The Master is a great Teacher; in one way or another he insists on having his way with those who follow him.

PAUL'S CAMPAIGNS

I

SAUL OF TARSUS

ACTS 9 : 1-22

A year or two after the death of Stephen a young man named Saul, of Tarsus, was converted to Christ. He had been a witness of the tragedy referred to, had "held the clothes" of the sanctimonious platoon, had seen the martyr's face shining "as it had been the face of an angel," and had heard his cry, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit!" He was unable to escape the logic of that scene. The face that shone amid the shower of stones must have haunted his dreams, until the day came when, on his way down to Damascus "breathing out slaughter against the disciples," he saw again the light that had glorified the face of Stephen and heard a Voice that filled his soul with trembling, "I am Jesus, whom thou persecutest!"

PAUL'S CAMPAIGNS

Blinded for a season, he saw things hidden from fleshly eyes; and turning right-about-face he cried, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" The answer in brief was, "Go!"

Three days later, in the house of one Judas, of Damascus, his commission was more clearly outlined as "a chosen vessel to declare the name of Christ to Gentiles and kings and the children of Israel." He then received his sight, was baptized and straightway began to preach Christ.

II

THE SUMMONS

ACTS 11:19-26

[Here occurs an Interval of Seven Years.]

It chanced that among those who had been scattered abroad at the stoning of Stephen, some had gone with the gospel as far as Antioch in Syria, where a revival occurred in which "a great number believed and turned unto the Lord." The Church at Jerusalem was appealed to for help, and it sent Barnabas, who was destined to figure largely in the enterprises of the early Church.

BARNABAS

Our information about this man is as follows: *First*, he was called "the son of Consolation," which intimates that his heart was full of kindness. *Second*, he was "a good man"; a most comprehensive phrase.

PAUL'S CAMPAIGNS

Third, he was "full of the Holy Ghost," that is, surcharged with spiritual light and power. *Fourth*, he was "full of faith," the faith that makes things-hoped-for substantial and establishes things-not-seen upon evidence that cannot be gainsaid. Great qualifications, these, for a missionary intent upon the winning of souls.

SAUL OF TARSUS SENT FOR

The work at Antioch grew to such dimensions that Barnabas was moved to cast about for some evangelist to help him. His thoughts immediately turned to Saul of Tarsus. Where was he? After his conversion, feeling the need of further thought and training, he had betaken himself to the Arabian desert. What a theological course that was! After finishing his three years' curriculum among the solitudes, he returned to Tarsus to await further orders.

This was where Barnabas found him. "And he brought him unto Antioch." There great things awaited him, as we shall see.

III

THE RENDEZVOUS

ACTS 13:1-3

The center of operations, which had hitherto been in Jerusalem, was now to be shifted to Antioch in Syria. At the beginning of our narrative the work in this great Gentile center had continued for a whole year under the direction of Barnabas and Paul.¹

Observe that Saul at this time assumed his Roman name, which was the proper thing for him to do in a Gentile city.

Observe, also, that the names of Barnabas and Paul will occur hereafter in the reverse

¹ A side-light is thrown upon the fraternal relations of the Jewish and Gentile Christians by the events recorded in Acts 11:27-30 and 12. It appears that Paul and Barnabas left Antioch, while the revival was in progress, to carry to Jerusalem a contribution for the relief of the famine-sufferers there. The state of affairs in Jerusalem at the time is set forth vividly in this parenthesis, which, though important as a link in the history of the early Church, is here omitted because it has no immediate bearing on the story of the missionary journeys.

PAUL'S CAMPAIGNS

order; because as the campaign progresses the latter forges to the front.

And observe that the preaching of these missionaries is so Christocentric that the converts are "first called Christians in Antioch"; a title originally given in derision but clothed with honor the world over to this day.

PREPARATIONS

In one of the early meetings of that memorable year at Antioch an incident occurred which gave a directing and controlling influence to subsequent events. The Voice of the Holy Spirit was heard saying, "Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them." In this divine call, re-emphasizing the commission of Christ, we find the *rationale* of an enterprise which was destined to change the currents and countercurrents of all history and set them flowing, just in the measure of Christian faithfulness, toward the Golden Age.

First. These men were "separated" to "go." All followers of Christ are required to "go" in like manner, and to keep going

PAUL'S CAMPAIGNS

as witnesses and evangelists of Christ; but all are not separated for work in "the regions beyond" like these men. Some are called to go down to the porches of Bethesda or out into the highways and hedges as city missionaries; others to go through the frontier villages of Galilee as home missionaries; still others to go into the coasts of Tyre and Sidon and the regions beyond as foreign missionaries. But as Paul and Barnabas, when they sallied forth, were sustained by the united prayers and substantial support of all who remained behind, so are the Christians of our time required and expected to stand behind the missionaries whom they send forth to the lands that lie in pagan darkness and the shadow of death. The words of William Carey when embarking for India, "As I go down into the mine, I depend upon you to hold the rope," put to an open shame all those who oppose world-wide evangelism.

Second. Paul and Barnabas were joined together for the work. So were the seventy sent out two and two; because "two are better than one, for if one fall the other will

PAUL'S CAMPAIGNS

lift him up.” And there was a particular fitness in the companionship of these two; because the fervor of one would strengthen and supplement the gentleness of the other. In process of time Paul and Barnabas had two quarrels; once over the wisdom of continuing the services of John Mark, whose courage had failed him at the foot of the Macedonian hills (Acts 15:36-40) and again over the necessity of admitting converts to the church through the door of Jewish ceremonialism (Gal. 2:11-13). But both these quarrels were adjusted in a friendly spirit.

Third. They were not only “separated” and joined together but equipped for their work. They had faith, courage and the *charismata*, or special gifts of the Spirit, for the working of “signs and wonders” to buttress their message. Indeed they had everything but money. Of this Barnabas had none, because he had previously given up all his possessions for the relief of needy Christians (Acts 4:36, 37); and as for Paul, he had undoubtedly been ostracised and stripped of his birthright when he accepted

PAUL'S CAMPAIGNS

Christ (Phil. 4:16-18). Thus they went forth, according to the Master's injunction, "without scrip or money in their purse," but strong in faith and in the power of the Holy Ghost.

GOING WITHOUT GOLD

It is greatly to be feared that in our time we are laying too exclusive an emphasis on the financial factor in missions. The work requires money, no doubt; but money is not the principal thing. The most wonderful results in the history of the propaganda have been accomplished by men of consecration who, once convinced that they were sent of God, waited for no further send-off. For the furnishing of the workers and the endowment of the work all Christians are required to give generously of the possessions which, as the Lord's stewards, they hold in trust, and subject to His call; but, whether there be money in the scrip or not, whosoever is "sent to seek and to save the lost" must go. And the wealth that builds schools, hospitals and churches is vain without an assurance that God can, if need be, wholly dispense with it.

IV

THE FIRST JOURNEY

ACTS 13 : 4-12

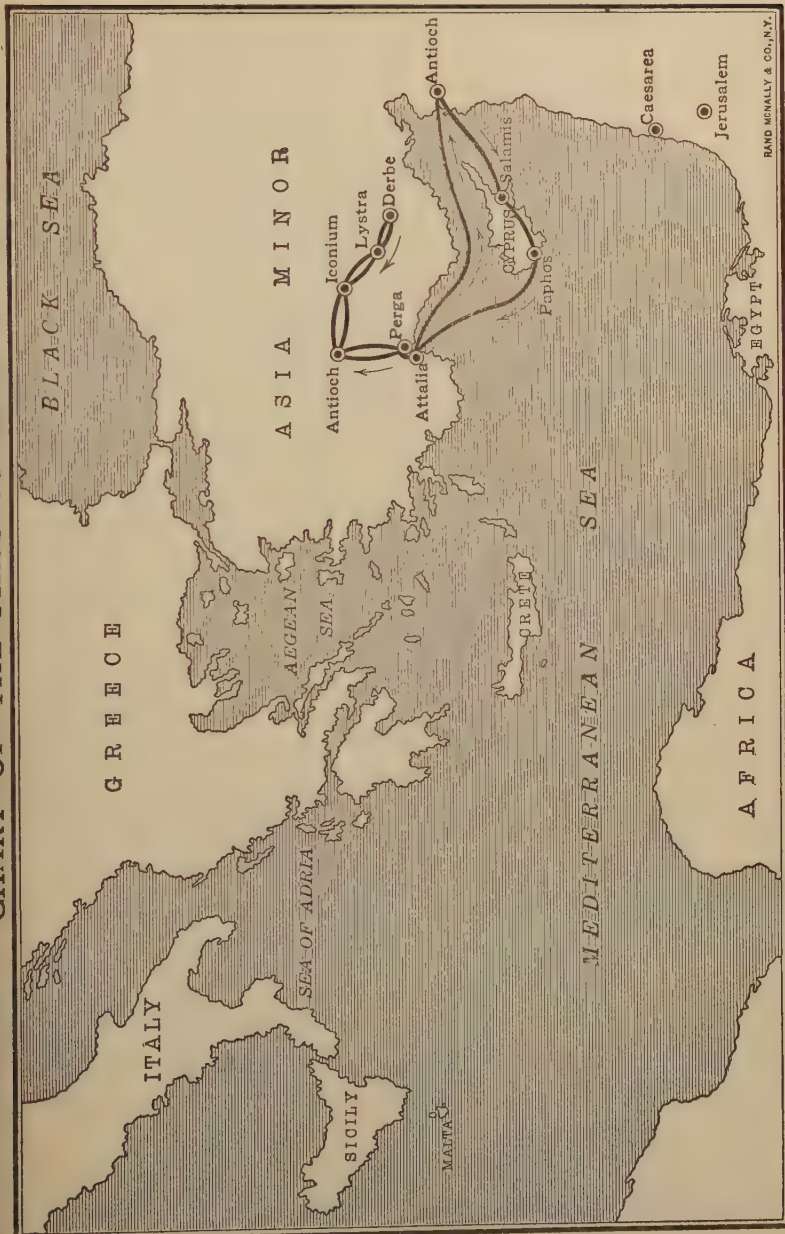
The Campaign was now under way.

On setting out from Antioch in Syria the two missionaries, accompanied by John Mark as a courier and assistant, turned their faces toward the island of Cyprus, probably for two reasons; first, because it was the birthplace of Barnabas (Acts 4:36) and second, because there were Christians there to welcome them (Acts 11:20).

AT SALAMIS

A quick run of a hundred miles, between sunrise and sunset, would convey them from Seleucia, the seaport of Antioch, to Salamis on the eastern coast of Cyprus. Of their work in this place there is no record except this, "They preached the word of God in the synagogues of the Jews."

CHART OF THE FIRST JOURNEY



PAUL'S CAMPAIGNS

The fact that there was more than one synagogue there gives us to understand that the missionaries had access to many Jews; but what are we to infer from the absence of persecution and the narrator's silence as to conversions? Were their hearers in Salamis so hidebound in formal sacerdotalism as to cavil at the "good news," or so indifferent to the claims of their own Messiah that they wilfully hid as it were their faces from him? In any case the missionaries left the place conscious of having done their best and hopefully trusting in the promise, "He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall *doubtless* come again with rejoicing bringing his sheaves with him."

AT PAPHOS

On the other side of the island, a hundred miles away, was Paphos, a city of a different sort. It was important as the residence of Sergius Paulus, the Roman governor, who is mentioned as a "prudent man." He had in his retinue a soothsayer whom he was accustomed to consult, particularly in matters

PAUL'S CAMPAIGNS

pertaining to religion. But the mind of Sergius was nevertheless open to conviction; so that on hearing of the arrival of the missionaries he invited them to come and unfold "the word of God." At this point, however, the soothsayer interposed and would have made the gospel of none effect but for the vigorous onset of Paul: "O full of all subtilty and all mischief, thou child of the devil, thou enemy of all righteousness, wilt thou not cease to pervert the right ways of the Lord! And now, behold, the hand of the Lord is upon thee, and thou shalt be blind, not seeing the sun for a season." Whereupon there fell on him a mist and a darkness; so that he must needs have some to lead him.

Here vanishes Elymas the soothsayer. Let us hope that his temporary blindness, like that which had previously befallen Paul himself, enabled him to see spiritual things in the right way.

As for the governor, he was convinced of the truth of the Gospel and "believed"; that is, he accepted Christ with a saving faith.

The itinerants had no intention of tarry-

PAUL'S CAMPAIGNS

ing long in Paphos or, for that matter, anywhere else. They had delivered their message and could well afford to leave the results with God.

The ship was ready to sail; a south wind was blowing. Farewell to Cyprus, and to Sergius Paulus rejoicing in newness of life! On to the regions beyond, where other souls were awaiting the good news!

V

AT ANTIOCH IN PISIDIA

ACTS 13 : 13-52

The port of entry in Pamphylia, where the missionaries landed, was the ancient and honorable city of Perga. It was now mid-summer, when most of the people were in the cool shelter of the mountains; wherefore, without tarrying, they resolved to push on.

At this juncture John Mark, the nephew of Barnabas, who had accompanied them as courier, announced that he would go no further. Perhaps the perils of the mountains frightened him; or possibly he was homesick, longing for his widowed mother in Jerusalem. Whatever the reason, he "departed and went not with them to the work." This was doubtless a great disappointment to his uncle Barnabas, but even more so to Paul who, as we have seen, was slow to forget it. (Acts 15:37-40.)

PAUL'S CAMPAIGNS

The next objective point of the itinerary was Antioch in Pisidia, which lay about a hundred miles inland among the hills. It would be at least a three days' journey for these footmen, through an uninhabited country. We may imagine Paul and Barnabas holding converse along the way, staff in hand, weary but resolute, kneeling together at nightfall and sleeping under the stars.

The Sabbath after their arrival found them in the synagogue. Their presence was observed; and after the reading of the Scripture lesson the usual invitation was given, "Brethren, if ye have any word of exhortation for the people, say on." Paul, on such occasions, always did have something to say. The message that trembled on his lips whenever he stood in the presence of his fellow-Jews was, "This Jesus is the Christ." So here; the burden of his first recorded sermon is the Messiahship of Jesus, whom they had crucified, despite what was written, "Behold, ye despisers, and wonder and perish: for I work a work in your days which ye shall not believe though a man declare it unto you."

PAUL'S CAMPAIGNS

The sermon made so deep an impression that Paul was urged to preach again on the next Sabbath; but during the week the rabbis had fomented such opposition that, when the congregation reassembled, there was a concerted uproar against him.

Then occurred one of the most significant and far-reaching incidents of the campaign. The missionaries turned upon their turbulent Jewish assailants with these words: "It was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to you; but seeing ye put it from you and judge yourselves unworthy of eternal life, lo, *we turn to the Gentiles!*"

Thus was the key turned to open the gospel door to all people. Thenceforth the walls of separation were broken down. The Gentiles were glad to listen, and many of them were converted to Christ: but as for the missionaries, the Jews being filled with rage "expelled them out of their coasts."

On leaving Antioch they "shook off the dust of their feet," to signify that, having done their utmost, they were free from re-

PAUL'S CAMPAIGNS

sponsibility for the welfare of those who persistently refused the good news.

But their work had not been as "water poured upon the ground, which cannot be gathered up again"; for they left behind them not a few disciples "filled with joy and with the Holy Ghost." So did these harvesters pass on to the regions beyond, rejoicing that their labor was not in vain in the Lord.

VI

IN THE MOUNTAINS OF LYCAONIA

ACTS 14: 1-20

On being driven out of Antioch in Pisidia the missionaries crossed the border and pursued their way along the great highway leading from Ephesus to the valley of the Euphrates. This was one of the roads which Cæsar had constructed in pursuance of his purpose of universal conquest. Little did he dream that it was destined to be used subsequently for the propaganda of the Prince of Peace.

AT ICONIUM

On this great highway, about sixty miles east of Antioch, lay the important city of Iconium. For three days at least the missionaries trudged on afoot through a desolate country, leaving no word on record as to the indubitable dangers that befell them along the way.

On reaching the city they at once, accord-

PAUL'S CAMPAIGNS

ing to their custom, betook themselves to the synagogue, where "they so spake that a great multitude," not only of the Jews but of the Hellenists—that is, Gentiles who had espoused the worship of Jehovah—were converted. In the words "they so spake" we have an intimation that Paul preached his customary sermon, "opening and alleging that Jesus is the Christ."

Of course there was trouble; and as a matter of course the unbelieving Jews began and fostered it. Nevertheless the missionaries kept up their work for "a long time," probably for some months; and they might have continued it indefinitely but for an assault led by the rabbis of the synagogue, with certain Gentiles whose minds were "evil affected against them." Whereupon the two yokefellows, mindful of the Master's words, "When they persecute you in one city flee unto another," left Iconium and plodded on.

AT LYSTRA

A journey of about forty miles to the southeast, on the same highway, brought

PAUL'S CAMPAIGNS

them to Lystra, an out-of-the-way place with few attractions for visitors. But there were souls there needing to be brought out of darkness into light.

The town had no synagogue. Just outside the gate was a Temple for the worship of Jupiter: and thereby hangs a tale. It was believed that Jupiter with his messenger Mercury had once visited Lystra. The story is told by Ovid on this wise:

“Here Jove with Hermes came; but in disguise
Of mortal men concealed their deities.
One laid aside his thunder, one his rod,
And many toilsome steps together trod.
For harbor at a thousand doors they knocked;
Not one of all the thousand but was locked.
At last a hospitable house they found,
A homely shed; the roof not far from ground
Was thatched with reeds and straw together bound.
There Baucis and Philemon lived.
From lofty roofs the gods repulsed before,
Now stooping, entered through the little door.
The man (their hearty welcome first express’d)
A common settle drew for either guest.”

The neighbors who had refused to entertain their divine visitors were subsequently punished by a terrible flood; but Philemon

PAUL'S CAMPAIGNS

and Baucis were rewarded by seeing their hut miraculously changed into a splendid temple, in which they were appointed to minister to the gods.

“Their little shed, scarce large enough for two,
Seems from the ground increased, in height and bulk
to grow.
A stately temple shoots within the skies:
The crotchets of their cot in columns rise:
The pavement polished marble they behold;
The gates with sculpture graced, the spires and tiles
of gold.”

The preaching of the missionaries at Lys-tra was in the market-places and open courts of the houses. One of the far-reaching conquests here was the conversion of a Jewess named Eunice, with her mother Lois and her son Timothy, a youth who was destined to play an important part as one of Paul's most efficient helpers in after years.

The miraculous healing of a cripple—who had doubtless been brought into the congregation to solicit alms—led the people to conclude that the gods were making them another visit. Barnabas, the taller and more imposing man, was taken for Jupiter: and

PAUL'S CAMPAIGNS

Paul, eloquent but of "mean presence," was Mercury, his messenger.

A rush was made for the Temple outside the gate; oxen were brought for sacrifices and garlands to crown the celestial visitors. Meanwhile the preaching in the open court went on; until the pagan priest, arrayed for sacrificial rites, appeared in the doorway. Then, in sudden consternation, the missionaries dispelled the illusion, crying, "Sirs, why do ye these things? We also are men of like passions with you, and preach that ye should turn from these vanities unto the living God!" No saint-worship for them! (Rev. 22:8, 9.)

It is but a short way from garlands to cobble-stones. No doubt some of those who had followed Christ on Palm Sunday crying, "Hosanna to the Son of David," were in the mob that on the next Friday shouted, "Crucify him!" So here; there was a speedy reaction, due to the influence of certain ones who had pursued the missionaries from Antioch and Iconium to oppose them. Paul was stoned, dragged out of the city and left for dead. A few faithful friends—

PAUL'S CAMPAIGNS

Barnabas with Lois and Eunice and young Timothy—ministered to him.

But Paul was not dead. A man is immortal till his work is done. The Lord had further need of him. So he arose; and the next morning, sadly bruised but undaunted in spirit, he with faithful Barnabas trudged on.

AT DERBE

The city of Derbe lay on the same road twenty miles further on. Their ministry here was undisturbed. Probably their enemies, "supposing that Paul was dead," congratulated themselves that the campaign of these troublers, who were "turning the world upside down," had come to an end. But the work continued and in Derbe "many were taught." Among them was a certain Gaius, who would presently join the itinerant group as a faithful servant of Christ. (Acts 20:4.)

VII

THE RETURN

ACTS 14: 21-28

If the mind of Paul had not been so wholly concentrated on the business in hand he would surely have turned aside on leaving Derbe to visit his old home at Tarsus, which was only a few miles away. But the love of Christ constrained both him and Barnabas; and they were much concerned for the converts whom they had left behind them. Who could tell what persecutions had befallen them, or how many had been allured from the faith?

For this reason they resolved to retrace their steps. Danger lay that way, but duty also. Wherefore, like their Master, they "set their faces steadfastly to go." One city after another they revisited—Lystra, Iconium, Antioch—fearless amid the scenes of former persecution, intent upon encour-

PAUL'S CAMPAIGNS

aging their converts and building the superstructure of their character and usefulness on the foundations of their faith.

In the account of the backward journey of these missionaries we have a clear outline of their logical method of procedure.

First, Evangelization. This comes foremost always in ministerial work: the presentation of the gospel as the power of God unto salvation. To omit this is to run without a message and to forfeit the penny at evening, "Well done, good servant!" Alas for a minister who does not realize his high privilege and responsibility as a winner of souls!

Second, Edification, or "building up" in the most holy faith. In the words "confirming the souls of the disciples" there is of course no reference to any formal ceremony of "confirmation," but to the strengthening of their belief in Christ and loyalty to him. This is further emphasized by the exhortation "to continue in the faith; and that we must through much tribulation (literally, *harrowing*) enter into the kingdom of God."

It is a mistake to suppose that our full

PAUL'S CAMPAIGNS

salvation is accomplished when we accept Christ. That does, indeed, deliver us from the penalty of sin; but it is only the beginning of that larger "salvation which is ready to be revealed in the last time." This is the salvation which we are to "work out with fear and trembling," to work out into its full fruition of character and usefulness. And it is the business of every minister to see that Christians are thus confirmed in their most holy faith.

Third, Organization. As they revisited the scene of their former labors the missionaries "ordained elders in every church." These elders or "presbyters," who are elsewhere called "bishops," were chosen by the people, as indicated by the word "ordained," which literally means "elected by a show of hands." Thus the converts were organized into churches—not only for self-government but for co-operation in service—and "commended to the Lord."

AT PERGA

This done, Paul and Barnabas pushed on to Perga, the seaport where they had done

PAUL'S CAMPAIGNS

nothing on their previous visit. As the summer was now over and the people had returned to their homes, the missionaries tarried and "preached the word."

Then—probably because there was no vessel in port—they went on to the neighboring town of Attalia, where they took ship; and so back to Antioch in Syria.

AT ANTIOCH IN SYRIA

The Church assembled to hear their report of "all that God had done with them" during the two or three years of their absence; and there was great rejoicing as Paul and Barnabas rehearsed how God had "opened the door of faith unto the Gentiles."

So ended the first of the great Missionary Journeys. "A long time" elapsed before another was undertaken; but a zealous spirit like Paul's cannot be confined in any "pent-up Utica." We shall presently see him venturing forth upon an enterprise still more boldly planned to carry the gospel to the uttermost parts of the earth.

A PARENTHESIS

ACTS 15: 1-35

[Not long after the return of Paul and Barnabas from their first missionary tour a serious trouble developed in the church at Antioch. It was fomented by certain converts who, like Paul himself, had previously belonged to "the most straitest sect" of Jewry, but, unlike him, had not fully entered into "the glorious liberty of the children of God."

The contention was that Gentile converts should enter the Christian Church by the Jewish door; that is, they must submit themselves to the ceremonial law. Now the ceremonial law, which was typical and prophetic of Christ, had been fulfilled at his coming, and therefore had passed away, as mists vanish at the rising of the sun. So it is written, "He blotted out the handwriting of

PAUL'S CAMPAIGNS

ordinances that was against us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross." (Col. 2:14.) The Gentile Christians maintained that salvation was conditioned simply and solely on personal faith in Christ; but these high-churchmen insisted that unless they would comply with the Jewish requirements "they could not be saved."

The two positions were irreconcilable. The breach widened accordingly, and the trouble spread rapidly among the churches. Something must be done and done quickly. A deputation, including Paul and Barnabas, was chosen to go up to the mother church at Jerusalem and confer with the apostles and elders about it.

THE COUNCIL AT JERUSALEM

The distance from Antioch to Jerusalem was about three hundred miles: more than five times what it would be by the travelling facilities of our time. On their journey the delegates conferred with churches along the way and were doubtless joined by other commissioners. When they reached Jerusalem an informal conference was first held with

PAUL'S CAMPAIGNS

the apostles and elders, after which the Council was convened, with James, the pastor of the mother church, in the chair.

This was the first, and in many respects the most significant, of a series of Œcumenical Councils held at intervals, as occasion seemed to require, down to the time of the Reformation. The next of importance was the Council of Nicæa, A. D. 325, in which the question of the Trinity was discussed—for the most part by men who had suffered for the truth's sake in recent persecutions—and was determined for all time. Its monument is the Nicene Creed. But the question before this Council at Jerusalem was one of most immediate importance, because, until it was settled, the Gentiles were kept waiting at the doorway of the Church.

The first address was made by Peter. We have of course the merest outline; but sufficient is given to indicate its bold and impassioned character. He began by reminding the Council how the Lord had chosen him "a good while ago" to open the door to the Gentiles. The reference was to the day of Pentecost, fourteen years before, when he

PAUL'S CAMPAIGNS

had turned the key—the key which Christ had previously committed to him for that purpose (Matt. 16:19)—saying, “The promise is unto you and to your children and to all that are afar off.” (Acts 2:14–39.) He then begged the Council not to put a ceremonial yoke upon the necks of the converts which neither their fathers nor themselves had been able to bear; and concluded with a ringing statement that the only condition of salvation for all alike is vital faith in Christ.

Paul and Barnabas followed with an account of their missionary journey and the many conversions which had occurred along the way. This carried its own appeal with it.

Then arose James, the minister of the mother church. He would naturally be disposed to favor the Jews, but his address was in the interest of peace by mutual concession. He began by supporting Peter's position as to the open door, and showed how the prophets had foretold it. He then, as the Moderator of the Council, pronounced his “sentence” or conclusion. This was

PAUL'S CAMPAIGNS

drawn up in the form of a letter to be sent to all the churches, as follows:

The apostles and elders and brethren send greeting unto the brethren which are of the Gentiles in Antioch and Syria and Cilicia. Forasmuch as we have heard that certain which went out from us have troubled you with words, subverting your souls, saying, Ye must be circumcised, and keep the law; to whom we gave no such commandment: it seemed good unto us, being assembled with one accord, to send chosen men unto you with our beloved Barnabas and Paul, men that have hazarded their lives for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. We have sent therefore Judas and Silas, who shall also tell you the same things by mouth. For it seemed good to the Holy Ghost, and to us, to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things; that ye abstain from meats offered to idols, and from blood, and from things strangled: and from fornication: from which if ye keep yourselves, ye shall do well. Fare ye well.

PAUL'S CAMPAIGNS

In this letter we observe, *first, a principle laid down*: to wit, the great doctrine of Justification by Faith; and *second, a policy marked out*, namely, that, so far as concessions could be made without any sacrifice of principle, they should be made by both sides. On the one hand, the Jews were to give up their insistence on the ceremonial law; on the other, the Gentiles were to refrain from certain practices which gave offence: (1) from blood—which the Jews avoid to this day; (2) from things strangled—because the blood remains in them; (3) from meats laid on pagan altars and subsequently offered for sale in the shambles—because this seemed to imply complicity with idol-worship; and (4) from the sensual habits which were prevalent among all pagan nations and to which the Gentile converts were especially prone. These mutual concessions were so obviously reasonable that the trouble ended then and there.

THE RETURN

On the return of the missionaries to Antioch a meeting was held at which the letter

PAUL'S CAMPAIGNS

was read and all "rejoiced for the consolation." One thing had been settled, that no priest or ecclesiastical court was to be allowed to stand in the way of any sinner in his approach to Christ.

Settled? Yes, so far as a Council could settle it. But the Cross is always an offence, and free grace has never ceased to be a stumbling-block to the natural man.

As time passed the Church drifted away from its moorings until, in the Dark Ages, it was again swamped in the stagnant waters of priestly ceremonialism. Then came Luther and the other reformers with a new proclamation of the old truth of Justification by Faith. They called it *articulum ecclesiæ stantis aut cadentis*, that is, "the Doctrine of a Standing or a Falling Church." And so it is and must continue to be. Moses and Elias go their way, and none is left but "Jesus only." In Him alone we put our trust; "Him first, Him last, Him midst and all in all."]

VIII

THE SECOND JOURNEY

ACTS 15:36-41; 16:1-10

It would appear that Paul and Barnabas, on returning from their first missionary tour, spent about two years in Antioch, not only in much-needed rest but in “teaching and preaching” for the confirmation of their brethren in the faith. It was during this period that the First Council was held at Jerusalem, as we have seen.

Another incident which subsequently occurred during the same period calls for brief mention: Peter came to Antioch and stirred up trouble. The controversy which attended his visit is briefly recorded in Gal. 2:11-14:

“But when Peter was come to Antioch I withstood him to the face, because he was to be blamed. For before that certain came

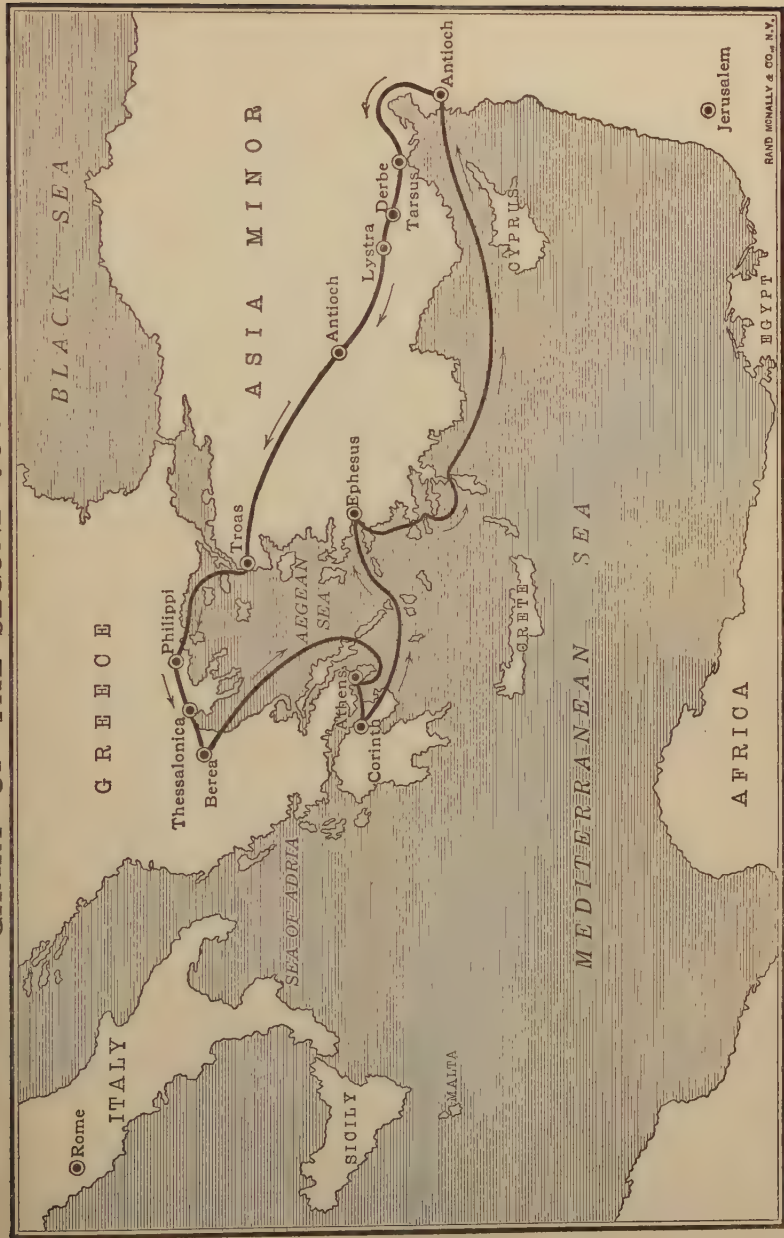
PAUL'S CAMPAIGNS

from James, he did eat with the Gentiles: but when they were come, he withdrew and separated himself, fearing them which were of the circumcision. And the other Jews dissembled likewise with him; insomuch that Barnabas also was carried away with their dissimulation. But when I saw that they walked not uprightly according to the truth of the gospel, I said unto Peter before them all, "If thou, being a Jew, livest after the manner of Gentiles, and not as do the Jews, why compellest thou the Gentiles to live as do the Jews?"

The dispute was amicably settled, however, in accordance with the decree of the Council in Jerusalem. (See Acts 15:22-29.)

In the meantime the *wanderlust* of the gospel had returned to the missionaries and the word of the Master, "Go ye!" was ringing in their ears. It was only a few days after the adjustment of the dispute referred to that Paul said to Barnabas, "Let us go again and visit our brethren in every city where we have preached the word of the Lord and see how they do."

CHART OF THE SECOND JOURNEY



PAUL'S CAMPAIGNS

But a serious difference arose between the two missionaries then and there. Barnabas was resolved on having his nephew, John Mark, accompany them; while Paul was equally determined that the youth whose courage had failed him in the face of danger at Pamphylia should not go. "And the contention was so sharp between them that they departed asunder." Barnabas took his nephew and sailed for Cyprus, while Paul set out in the opposite direction, both intent upon a recanvass of their former work.

The new companion of Paul was Silas, who had been one of the deputies appointed by the Council to convey its decrees to the churches. He is characterized as "a faithful brother," and was one of the hopeful guild of Singers in the Night. (Acts 16: 25.)

They set out toward the northwest, "confirming the churches" by the way, until they reached Derbe, where the previous journey had ended. From there they passed on to Lystra, where they were joined by Timothy, "the gentle boy of Lystra," who was destined to play an important part in subsequent

PAUL'S CAMPAIGNS

events. Thence to Iconium; after which they would have turned aside into "Asia," a region of pagan darkness on the southwest; "but they were forbidden." To the northwest lay Bithynia, another pagan country where they longed to preach the gospel, "but the Spirit suffered them not." Strange guidance this! For some reason they must turn neither to the right nor to the left but bear straight on.

AT TROAS

So they came to Troas on the verge of the Hellespont; and there the reason of their strange guidance was made plain. In a vision Paul saw a man of Macedonia, with outstretched hands, calling, "Come over and help us!" It thus appeared that the missionaries were to plume their wings for a bolder flight. Europe was before them! When once the Hellespont was crossed they would be in "the regions beyond," and a new impulse would be given to the enterprise of universal conquest. Now then, the world for Christ!

IX

ON TO EUROPE

ACTS 16:11-40

It is safe to say that, on the morning after his vision, Paul was early at the docks in Troas inquiring for the first ship sailing across the Hellespont. There were four who took passage; Paul, Silas, Timothy and Luke, "the good physician." We know that Luke here joined the company because the narrative, of which he was the writer, now moves on with the pronoun "we." (Acts 16:11.)

It is worthy of note, in passing, that the heroes of the two great classics of Rome and Greece—the *Æneid* of Virgil and the *Odyssey* of Homer—had both embarked from the port of Troas; but the momentous voyages of *Æneas* and *Ulysses* were not worthy of comparison with the great enterprise which stirred the hearts of these adventurous men.

PAUL'S CAMPAIGNS

AT PHILIPPI

On landing at Neapolis they pushed their way up through the mountain roads to the important city of Philippi, where Paul hoped to meet the Macedonian who had beckoned and called him. In their sojourn here they won three trophies of grace.

The first was Lydia, "a seller of purple." Her name indicates that she had come from a city in that same province of Pamphylia whither the Spirit had forbidden them to go. Thus, by indirection, the missionaries were likely to reach the object in mind. They met this woman, on the first Sabbath after their arrival, at a place set apart for prayer by the river-side. On hearing the gospel her heart was immediately opened to receive it. No doubt Paul was surprised to find that "the man" of his vision was a woman; but she was a woman of wealth and influence whose candle was lighted to shine afar. The missionaries had thus far been satisfied with humble quarters in some lodging house; but Lydia now, with Oriental hospitality, threw open her home—as she had

PAUL'S CAMPAIGNS

opened her heart—and entertained them during their sojourn in the city.

The second trophy of the campaign in Philippi was a slave-girl, possessed of an evil spirit. Her owners had made capital of her malady by passing her off as a pythoness, whose incoherent utterances were represented to be the divinations of Apollo. Day after day as the missionaries proceeded to their work the slave girl cried after them, "These men are the servants of the most high God, which show unto us the way of salvation!" Little wonder that Paul was "grieved" on her account; and little wonder that he healed her! But this miracle was the occasion of no end of trouble. The masters of the pythoness, seeing that "the hope of their gains was gone," succeeded in collecting a mob; and presently, after one of those scourgings with which Paul was so familiar ("five times was I beaten with forty stripes save one"), he and Silas found themselves in jail.

The third trophy of their evangelistic ardor was their jailer. The two missionaries, cast down but not destroyed, whiled

PAUL'S CAMPAIGNS

away the dreary hours of the night by singing, probably one of the Hallel Psalms with the refrain, "Oh that men would praise the Lord for his goodness and for his wonderful works to the children of men!" Then on a sudden the earth began to tremble and the prisoners' chains were loosed!

The jailer awoke, and supposing that his wards—for whose safeguarding he was responsible with his life—had escaped, would have killed himself; just as nowadays a Japanese jailer would commit hari-kari under like circumstances. But Paul cried, "Do thyself no harm! We are all here!" Whereupon the man, who had probably heard Paul's message, cried out under sudden conviction, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" There could be only one answer: "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ!" That done, the rest would be plain sailing. The jailer fell in with the overtures of divine mercy and became a Christian.

Here were three wonderful trophies to show for the campaign at Philippi. And who shall say how many were saved through them?

PAUL'S CAMPAIGNS

We now observe Paul in a different light. Thus far he had pursued his work as a most humble man. But when the magistrates, on learning that Paul was a Roman citizen and had been scourged without due process of law, sent messengers to say, "Let those men go," *those men refused to go*. "Nay, verily," said Paul. "They have beaten us openly, uncondemned, being Romans, and have cast us into prison; and now do they thrust us out privily? Nay, verily; but let them come themselves and fetch us out!" Thus he stood squarely upon his rights. But when anything was to be gained by doing so, we shall find that he and his companions were ever willing to lay down all their rights that men might walk over them into the kingdom of God.

X

AT THESSALONICA

ACTS 17: 1-9

On being driven out of Philippi the band of missionaries turned their faces toward the west. "Westward the course of Empire takes its way." A journey of seventy miles—passing through the unimportant towns of Amphipolis and Appolonia—brought them to Thessalonica; and there, in the hospitable home of Jason, they tarried for several months.

Why were they attracted to Thessalonica? *First*, because it was a populous place and in many respects the most important city in that portion of the world. *Second*, because there was a considerable number of Jews there, whose religion furnished a foundation for the preaching of the Messianic claims of Jesus. *Third*, because it was the center of the weaving industry; where Paul the

PAUL'S CAMPAIGNS

tent-maker would be likely to find work. (1 Thess. 2:9.) *Fourth*, because it was a coign of vantage for an enterprise that was intended and expected to radiate far and wide.

To-day Salonica is the second city of Turkey in Europe. In the World's War the troops of the Entente Alliance were landed there to advance upon the enemy on the eastern front.

On three successive Sabbaths the missionaries preached in the synagogue,¹ reasoning from the Scriptures that "this Jesus is the Christ," and with the usual result. Many of the Hellenes, i. e., Judaized pagans, were converted; but the Jews themselves were "slow of heart to believe all that the prophets had spoken." Then, as their custom was, the missionaries left the synagogue and turned to the Gentiles, enough of whom were converted to form the nucleus of an important church.

It was too much to expect, however, that they would be allowed to continue in this

¹ There are thirty-six synagogues in the modern city of Salonica.

PAUL'S CAMPAIGNS

way. The Jews succeeded in persuading certain "lewd fellows of the baser sort"—the *lazzaroni* or "idlers of the forum"—to drive them out. A mob stormed the house of Jason, and, not finding the missionaries, carried him and his associates before the magistrates, who, perceiving no ground of action, bound them over to keep the peace and let them go.

All of which suggests a number of things.

First, the gospel never changes. A converted Jew in charge of a mission among his countrymen tells me that his work is precisely along the lines marked out by Paul, "opening and alleging from the Scriptures that this Jesus is the Christ."

Second, the opposition never changes. The Christians of Armenia are persecuted and massacred by the Turks on the pretext that they are turning things "upside down" by their insistence on the supremacy of Christ.

Third, the assurance of success never changes. Paul and his companions may have counted their labor as water poured upon the ground; but ten years later, in a

PAUL'S CAMPAIGNS

letter written to the church in Thessalonica, he says, "From you sounded out the word of the Lord, not only in Macedonia and Achaia; but also in every place your faith to Godward is spread abroad." The faith to Godward of these Christians was no light hid under a bushel: it "sounded forth" like the blast of a trumpet before the chariot of an advancing king; it "went forth" like the shout of an army following after him.

Let all the Lord's workers be of good cheer; the seed-sowing is never in vain, though oftentimes the harvest ripens on their graves. The promise is yea and amen: "He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless" (not may but *shall*; not perhaps but *doubtless*) "come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him."

XI

AT BERCEA

ACTS 17: 10-14

On leaving Thessalonica, under cover of the night, Paul turned his face toward the southwest; and after a journey of sixty miles came to Berœa. This was a city of no special importance except for the fact that it lay on a slope of the Olympian range and was supposed to be under the special care of the twelve gods.

The Jews of Berœa are characterized as "more noble than those of Thessalonica" because "they received the word with readiness of mind." This is a Title of Nobility which is open to all. "A king can mak' a belted knight, a marquis, duke an' a' that"; but only God can admit a man into the Peerage of Truth.

(1) It is said of these Berœans, to their credit, that "*they searched the Scriptures daily, whether those things were so.*"

PAUL'S CAMPAIGNS

By this we are given to understand, on the one hand, that they believed in the Scriptures as the infallible test and standard of truth. As to their inspiration, this was not an open but a closed question, having been settled by and for these converts when they entered into covenant with God.

The reason why many of the church members of our time are oppressed with doubts as to the fundamentals of the gospel is because they are not fully persuaded in their own minds that the Bible can be trusted; a point which should have been determined at the very outset of their Christian life.

On the other hand, it appears that when Paul presented some unusually startling propositions, they did not take him at his word, but "searched the Scriptures" to see whether these things were so.

What a lot of perplexity would be avoided if the Christians of our time were to treat current problems in the same way. The trouble is that, in many cases, the original question as to the trustworthiness of Scripture is still undetermined, so that they have nothing to go by. Instead of applying the

PAUL'S CAMPAIGNS

divine touchstone to their doubts, they must needs be forever investigating the reliability of the touchstone itself.

In many of our so-called "Bible classes" the pupils are instructed about the Bible and not in it. They are like prospectors who go about searching for a gold-field, rather than like miners who, having found a gold-field, are engaged in getting the gold out of it.

(2) We are advised, from the example of the Bereans, as to *the right method of searching the Scriptures*.

There are some who read the Bible for no other purpose, apparently, than to criticise it. This is the case with many who call themselves "Biblical experts"; they approach the Book with an ill-disguised prejudice against it. Of course, under such circumstances, they find errors and discrepancies where none are visible to unbiased eyes.

There are others who study the Bible to confirm their own opinions. These are *eisegetes*, reading their own views into the Book instead of getting their doctrine out of it, as devout *exegetes* are wont to do.

PAUL'S CAMPAIGNS

Others still are moved to search the Scriptures by a sincere desire to discover the truth. In order to succeed in this quarter there must be, *first*, a readiness to learn what God has to say about the matter in hand, and, *second*, a personal independence which takes no man's word for it. The Bereans were to be praised for declining to accept Paul's statements on his own recognizance until they had applied the touchstone. No man's *ipse dixit* is final, whether in the pulpit or out of it. Nothing is conclusive but the Word of God.

(3) *What was the result?* The Bereans came to the conclusion that Paul's postulate, "This Jesus is the Christ," was true to their Oracles; and therefore they accepted it.

Thus they found Christ, as it is written, "Therefore many of them believed." And, finding Christ, they found life also; as he himself had said, "Search the Scriptures; for in them ye think (and rightly think) ye have eternal life; and these are they which testify of me."

Here we leave the Bereans. The preaching of Paul might have gone on indefinitely

PAUL'S CAMPAIGNS

but for mischief-makers who came over from Thessalonica and created a disturbance. With a due regard for discretion as the better part of valor, he took his departure to larger fields. The pagan world was before him—Athens, Corinth and the regions beyond! Still “Westward the course of Empire takes its way.”

XII

AT ATHENS

ACTS 17: 15-34

On being expelled from Berœa the apostle went down to the nearest seaport and took ship for Athens. A three days' voyage carried him past some of the most memorable scenes in history, such as Thermopylæ, where Leonidas and his three hundred died for freedom, and Marathon, where Themistocles drove back the Persian invasion. But Paul's interest lay further on.

Landing at Piræus, he at once proceeded to Athens, "the eye of Greece, mother of arts and eloquence."

Standing alone in the market-place he saw a city "wholly given to idolatry." There were statues of the gods on every hand; colonnades of gods; "more gods than men." On looking down the street of Hermes he saw a winged figure of the Olympian herald

PAUL'S CAMPAIGNS

in front of every home; if he looked along the Avenue of Tripods, he would see an unbroken line of altars and statues, with votive offerings presented by grateful athletes whom the gods had helped in the Isthmian games. Gods everywhere! Gods on pedestals, in niches, on the corners of the streets; gods and demigods; good, bad and indifferent—a wilderness of gods! No wonder the devout soul of the missionary was stirred within him.

He began his work at once, “disputing in the synagogue with the Jews, and in the Agora daily with them that met with him.” There was no difficulty in getting an audience; for Athens was proverbially the paradise of gossips and saunterers. Its shibboleth was, “What’s the news?” So they gathered about him, men and women, priests and philosophers, all sorts and conditions of people. And he spoke to them of Jesus and the Resurrection, or as the Greeks had it, “Jesus and Anastasis,” whom they supposed to be a pair of new deities. He who introduced a god into Athens was counted a public benefactor. The interest of his audi-

PAUL'S CAMPAIGNS

ence was thus enlisted at once. Presently they said, "Let us go to Areopagus for a better hearing." So to the Hill of Mars they went; and the apostle there preached a sermon which has come ringing down the ages.

OBSERVE THE PREACHER

A little man, stoop-shouldered, weak-eyed and a stammerer; but it did not take the Athenians long to discover that here was no ordinary man.

OBSERVE THE PULPIT

A fateful place. Many a culprit had been there devoted to death. On this platform Demosthenes had stood and uttered "breathing thoughts in burning words." Here Socrates had made his apology and was condemned to drink the fatal hemlock. On a shelf of rock near by stood the Temple of the Furies; and above it towered the Temple of Mars. To this place Paul brought such "news" as these newsmongers had never heard before. He spoke as an ambassador from the court of heaven, bringing a message of peace to troubled souls.

PAUL'S CAMPAIGNS

OBSERVE THE AUDIENCE

Not a few of Paul's hearers had the names of their deities worn as frontlets between their eyes. Here were philosophers also and students in classic robes, representing all the various schools by the Ilissus. Some were Stoics; i. e., pantheists, who spoke of God as "the universal soul," and of man as an exhalation whose destiny was to be absorbed presently in the all-pervading Spirit of the Universe, as a drop of water disappears in a boundless sea. Others were Epicureans, materialists, who said "Death ends all." And, inasmuch as life was circumscribed by the narrow horizons of time and sense, what better could they do than make the most of the passing hour? Their aphorism was, "Let us eat, drink and be merry; for tomorrow we die." Others were Academicians, practical agnostics, whose suggestions were all prefaced with a perhaps or it-may-be-so. And besides these there was the usual throng of curiosity-mongers and hangers-on. To the mind of the great Mis-

PAUL'S CAMPAIGNS

sionary all these were souls, precious in the sight of God.

OBSERVE THE SERMON

Its exordium was most felicitous. Taking for his text the inscription upon an altar which he had observed in the market-place, "To an Unknown God," he began by saying, "Ye men of Athens, in all things I perceive that ye are very religious." It was a clever compliment and gained him their good-will. His proposition was announced in these terms: "*This unknown God declare I unto you.*" He then proceeded to show how God, so far from being really unknown, had unveiled himself in many ways: first, in creation; he "made the world and all things therein": second, in providence; "In him we live and move and have our being": and third, in grace; "By that Man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men in that he raised him from the dead." At this point the speaker was interrupted and the assembly was broken up.

PAUL'S CAMPAIGNS

OBSERVE THE RESULT

There were some who mocked; others who said, "We will hear thee again" (but they probably never did), and a few who believed. Among these were Dionysius, a member of the Court of Areopagus, and a woman named Damaris, of whom we hear no more.

But Paul's sermon on Mars Hill was not in vain; for thus saith the Lord, "As the rain cometh down and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower and bread to the eater, so shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth; it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it."

XIII

AT CORINTH

ACTS 18: 1-22

All that now remains of Corinth is a confused mass of ruins. At the time of Paul's visit it vied with Athens in renown: but they were very different cities. Athens was learned and aristocratic; Corinth was commercial and democratic. Its two ports, Cenchreæ on the east and Lechæum on the west, invited the commerce of the world. Its magnificent places of amusement made it the most popular of summer resorts. Its Temple of Venus (where no less than a thousand so-called "priestesses" were consecrated to open sensuality) with innumerable shrines of other gods, threw over its nameless vices the glamour of religion. To speak of a woman as "a Corinthian" was equivalent to calling her a courtesan. To say that a young man was "living in Corinth" was to affirm that he was recklessly sowing his wild oats.

PAUL'S CAMPAIGNS

It was a busy, wealthy, populous, pleasure-loving, splendid, wicked city.

Paul was alone when he came to Corinth, having left his three companions—Luke, Silas and Timothy—to look after the converts in Philippi, Thessalonica and Berea. He began his work, as usual, by preaching in the synagogue, “and persuaded the Jews and the Greeks.” When Silas and Timothy joined him he had added impetus; he was “pressed in the spirit, and testified to the Jews that Jesus was Christ.” As usual the Jews refused to hear him. He then “turned to the Gentiles”: and continued his labors among them a year and a half, organizing the converts into one of the strongest and most faithful of the early churches.

Among the first of these converts were Aquila and Priscilla, a man and his wife who, having been driven out of Rome by the decree of Claudius against the Jews, had come to Corinth and set up a tent-maker's shop. Paul found employment here and, while engaged at his trade, converted his employers to Christ. In after years they were among his most devoted friends.

PAUL'S CAMPAIGNS

Another of the early converts of this campaign was Crispus, the ruler of the synagogue, who of course lost his position when he accepted Christ. He and his family were among the few whom Paul himself baptized; this sacrament being usually committed to other hands, perhaps because of his physical infirmities. (See 1 Cor. 1: 14-17.)

Another of the Corinthian converts was Gaius, probably a man of considerable wealth and distinction; whom Paul calls "my host," from which we may infer that the apostle made his home with him. (Romans 16: 23.)

Another was a certain Justus, "whose house joined hard to the synagogue." When the synagogue was closed to the preaching of the gospel, the home of Justus was thrown open to the followers of Christ; and the Corinthian church, which was destined to play so important a part in history, was organized there.

Another of Paul's personal friends was Sosthenes, who had succeeded Crispus when the latter was deposed as ruler of the synagogue. Paul speaks of him affectionately

PAUL'S CAMPAIGNS

as "our brother." (1 Cor. 1:1.) It would appear that he subsequently served as the apostle's scribe or amanuensis, a helper greatly needed by Paul on account of his weak eyes.

There were many other Corinthian stars in Paul's crown of rejoicing, some of whom are mentioned, all of whom are recorded in the heavenly Book of Remembrance. In one of his darkest hours of spiritual depression—for Paul was a man of like passions with other men and there were many discouragements in his lonely work—he had a vision in which the Lord comforted him by saying, "Be not afraid, but speak, and hold not thy peace; for I am with thee, . . . for I have much people in this city." By which he was given to understand that his work was not to be measured by its visible fruits. "The Lord knoweth them that are his." Who can count the "hidden ones"?

An attempt was made by the Jews to break up Paul's work, by bringing against him the charge, "This fellow persuadeth men to worship God contrary to the law," i.e., con-

PAUL'S CAMPAIGNS

trary to the Jewish law. Fortunately the case came before a brother of Seneca, known as "the amiable Gallio," who at this time was Proconsul of Achaia. As a Roman magistrate he very properly declined to pass upon a purely religious question and threw the matter out of court.

The church at Corinth being organized and well under way, Paul "took leave of the brethren" and set sail for home. By the way he tarried at Ephesus and at Jerusalem—where he had a vow to fulfill—and at Cæsarea; and then on to Antioch, the center of operations, to report the blessed results of his Second Missionary Journey. It was, doubtless, a happy "hame-bringing," accompanied with much thanksgiving for the goodness of God.

How little did the wealthy, worldly, pleasure-loving, idol-worshiping people of Corinth suspect that their city would find its most enduring fame through the patient, difficult, inconspicuous work of Paul! Who would have imagined that its most distinguished citizen, the Proconsul Gallio, would

PAUL'S CAMPAIGNS

best be remembered by his association with
"the ugly little Jew"! ¹ Here is comfort
for all humble workmen.

"Toil on; in hope o'ercome
The steeps God set for thee;
F'or past the Alpine summits of great toil
Lieth thine Italy!"

¹ So Renan calls Paul.

XIV

THE THIRD JOURNEY

ACTS 18: 23-28; 19: 1-41; 20: 1

On reaching Antioch in Syria, at the close of his second journey, Paul settled down for "some time," probably the greater part of a year. Then the wanderlust of missions again took possession of him; and he set out to revisit and "strengthen" the churches.

"All the country of Galatia and Phrygia," being familiar ground, was passed over as rapidly as possible and without note. The great city of Ephesus was the first objective point; after which Paul proposed to push on to Corinth, thence to Jerusalem, and after that to Rome. Always to Rome!

AT EPHEBUS

But events so shaped themselves, and so great were the demands of the people of Ephesus, that on reaching that city he was

PAUL'S CAMPAIGNS

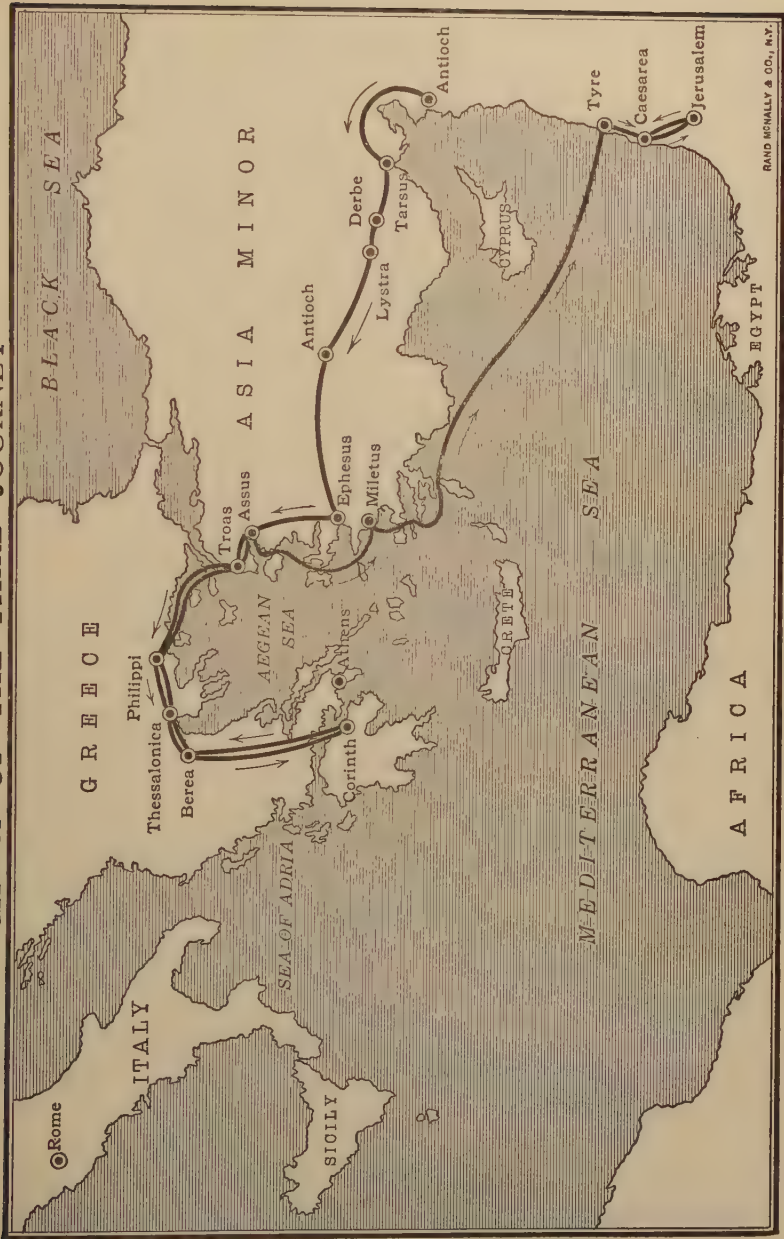
constrained to remain there three whole years.

I. It will be remembered that on the return from his second missionary journey he had brought with him the tent-makers Aquila and Priscilla, whom he left at Ephesus. (Acts 18:19.) These faithful workers had not been idle there; but by a quiet ministry had been arranging a full "preparedness" for Paul's arrival.

II. The presence of Apollos in Ephesus had contributed to the same end. He is spoken of as "a Jew of Alexandria, an eloquent man and mighty in the Scriptures." The fact that he came from Alexandria, the city of the great library and of the Septuagint, is an intimation that he was a learned man. His familiarity with the Scriptures shows that he was a loyal Jew. The further statement that he "taught diligently the things of the Lord" makes it clear that he had at least accepted the Messiahship of Jesus; and, being "fervent in spirit," he was doing his utmost to persuade others to believe in it.

But as yet he was inadequately equipped

CHART OF THE THIRD JOURNEY



PAUL'S CAMPAIGNS

for his work, "knowing only the baptism of John." He had learned much of Jesus at second hand; but of his real teaching, of the true significance of the Cross, and particularly as to the reality and personality of the Holy Spirit, he had little or no information.

At this juncture Aquila and Priscilla came to the rescue. "They expounded unto him the way of God more perfectly." A curious conjunction, this; the learned Apollos sitting at the feet of two tent-makers! Was there ever a stranger theological seminary than this in the house of Aquila and Priscilla? But even they could not fully instruct him in the way. They could help him to move on from the baptism of John the Baptist, which was only unto repentance, into the baptism of Jesus, which was unto the fulness of life; but they were incompetent to advise him as to the miracle of Pentecost and its wonderful significance. Poor Apollos! It is a hard business for one who has not made the acquaintance of the Holy Spirit to "run up the heavenly way."

III. This, then, was the state of affairs when Paul arrived in Ephesus. Apollos

PAUL'S CAMPAIGNS

was not there to greet him, having gone on to Corinth with credentials from his Ephesian friends; and he was now engaged in "helping believers and convincing the Jews" of that city: but he had left behind him in Ephesus a little group of earnest seekers after truth.

Paul at once entered the synagogue after his usual custom, and for three months continued to "speak boldly," "disputing and persuading the things concerning the kingdom of God": and of course with the usual result.

On being expelled from the synagogue he entered the School of Tyrannus—possibly a philosopher who had lost his following—where he made his headquarters for two years or more. During this time three incidents of special note occurred.

First, Paul met the followers of Apollos, twelve men in particular, of whom he asked, "Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed?" They answered (not, "We have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost," but), "Nay, we did not so much as hear whether the Holy Spirit was

PAUL'S CAMPAIGNS

given." Whereupon Paul told them how Christ's promise had been fulfilled on the Day of Pentecost. And when they confessed that they had only received John's baptism unto repentance, he baptized them "in the name of the Lord Jesus," with the baptism of fire and power.

Second, the great bonfire. The superstitious use of the name of Jesus by the seven Sons of Sceva, for the healing of demoniacal possession, led to a general revolt among the Christians against all sorts of fetichism; so that charms and cabalistic letters of every sort were brought together and burned up. If all our fetiches were thus disposed of—such as rosaries and crooked sixpences and broad phylacteries and foolish dreads of thirteen and Friday and the like—what a bonfire there would be!

Third, the riot, led by Demetrius the silversmith. Paul's preaching against the worship of idols had so reduced the sale of shrines and images that great Diana, the tutelary goddess of Ephesus, was being set at naught. The craftsmen, whose business was seriously affected, stirred up the popu-

PAUL'S CAMPAIGNS

lace; and Paul and his companions might have fared badly indeed but for the tactful management of the town-clerk in dispersing the mob.

It was at length apparent to Paul that the time had arrived to move on: so "he called unto him the disciples, and embraced them, and departed." He had already dispatched Timothy and Erastus to Corinth to prepare the way before him. On to Thessalonica, to Berœa, to Athens, to Rome. Always to Rome, the center of the world! He *must* preach the gospel at Rome!

XV

A BUSY YEAR—A. D. 57

ACTS 20:1-12

At the close of Paul's three eventful years in Ephesus, "the uproar having ceased," he resumed his journey: leaving Timothy behind him to look after the welfare of the Christians in that city. (1 Tim. 1:3.)

He went afoot to Troas, probably canvassing en route the Seven Churches of Asia. He had been hoping that Titus would join him at Troas; but being disappointed in this, he pressed on alone, "exhorting" by the way. (2 Cor. 2:12, 13.)

On reaching Macedonia he revisited the churches of Philippi, Thessalonica and Berea, meanwhile reaching out into other unevangelized towns and villages. Not satisfied with this he pushed on into the regions beyond, going "round about unto Illyri-

PAUL'S CAMPAIGNS

cum,"¹ the mountainous country on the eastern shore of the Adriatic Sea.

It is characteristic of Paul that he should have passed over this important and dangerous itinerary with so slight mention. Who knows what wonders were wrought, what seed-sowing for future harvest, by this "roundabout" tour? "The day shall declare it." (Romans 15:19; 1 Cor. 3:13.)

He then turned southward into Greece, and on reaching Corinth was comforted by the arrival of his beloved Titus. (2 Cor. 7:6, 7.) While there, for a period of three months, he not only preached and ministered to the disciples but found time to write the Epistle to the Romans, which was sent by the hand of the deaconess Phœbe, as a circular letter to the Gentile churches.

It was now his purpose to sail for Syria, accompanied by seven chosen helpers; namely, Sopater, Aristarchus, Secundus, Gaius, Timothy, Tychicus and Trophimus; a noble band. But "man proposes, God disposes." A plot was discovered against the

¹ Illyricum embraced the modern countries of Bosnia, Croatia and Dalmatia.

PAUL'S CAMPAIGNS

life of Paul which made it necessary for the seven to sail without him, the understanding being that he would rejoin them at Troas.

So Paul, alone and afoot, turned his face toward the north and came roundabout to Philippi, where he was in time to join his friends in the keeping of the Passover; a feast which had a peculiar significance for the early Christians by reason of its close association with the Lord's Supper. (1 Cor. 5: 7, 8.) At this point Paul's comfort and happiness were greatly enhanced by meeting Luke, his physician and devoted friend, who had been left in charge of the Philippian church and whose connection with the narrative is still indicated by the occurrence of the familiar "we."

After the celebration of the feast, Luke says, "we sailed away from Philippi," and came "to Troas." The voyage took five days, twice the usual time, by reason of the equinoctial winds. On their arrival they met the seven missionaries with many others and remained seven days. On the evening of the first day of the week (note the observance of the First Day as the Christian Sab- .

PAUL'S CAMPAIGNS

bath), when the church was assembled for worship, Paul preached until midnight. The room was crowded, the air was bad (owing to "many lights"), and the sermon was long: wherefore it is not surprising that a youth named Eutychus should have gone to the window ledge for a breath of fresh air. Overcome by faintness and drowsiness, he fell into the street and was taken up dead; whereupon Paul restored him to life. The meeting then continued until the break of day.

The band of missionaries took ship the next morning; but again they left Paul behind them. For some reason he preferred to go afoot and by himself, agreeing to rejoin his companions at Assos, a port of entry twenty miles south. Here with his staff in hand on the lonely road we leave him.

A busy year, indeed. Paul was a born itinerant: and how wonderfully he made his itineraries tell for the glory of God! He was engaged all this year in doing three things:

First, "Exhorting." The Greek here means "calling near with much discourse."

PAUL'S CAMPAIGNS

Paul was always persuading the unconverted to come to Christ and Christians to come nearer. This was his conception of preaching. There are many unsuccessful preachers who would do well to adopt it.

Second, writing to the churches. Two certainly and probably more of his epistles were composed during this year. How did he find time for this? Where was his leisure for study? The answer is that time and leisure are always given in sufficiency to those who plan great things for God.

Third, "Collecting for the saints." It was in Paul's mind, when projecting this journey, to canvass the Gentile churches for another offering in behalf of the famine-stricken Christians at Jerusalem. This help was in due time received by the mother church with many thanks; and it served as an effective bond of union between the Jewish and Gentile followers of Christ.

So did the great Missionary employ his time and energy for Christ. In that very year the Roman general Suetonius was pushing his conquests in Britain. Who would have predicted that Paul would survive Sue-

PAUL'S CAMPAIGNS

tonius even in the world's esteem? Yet so it is. The reason? Paul had set his heart upon the noblest and best, saying, "The love of Christ constraineth me."

Paul, like Suetonius, was dreaming of conquest, but of another sort. In his Epistle to the Romans (15:20-33) he says, "Whosoever I take my journey into Spain I will come to you." He meant to reach Spain—the end of the world by "the Pillars of Hercules"—pausing at Rome on the way! What if he did fail of that far-distant goal? It is the dreamers of dreams and the seers of visions who ever accomplish great things for God.

XVI

AT MILETUS

ACTS 20 : 13-38

FAREWELL TO OLD FRIENDS

The group of missionaries, as we have seen, sailed from Troas without Paul; the understanding being that he would rejoin them at Assos. He set out, accordingly, alone and afoot—perhaps because he longed to be by himself for prayer and meditation—and after a journey of twenty miles reached Assos, where the ship with his friends was awaiting him. The voyage was close in-shore and cautiously slow on account of the equinoctial winds.

No stop was made at Ephesus, because Paul wished to be at Jerusalem in time for the Feast of Pentecost. The ship touched, however, at Miletus; which was near enough for the elders of the Ephesian church to come, at the summons of the great apostle, to hold a farewell interview with him.

PAUL'S CAMPAIGNS

The most notable of the ruins of this ancient city of Miletus are the standing columns of a pagan temple and the well-preserved circle of an amphitheater once thronged by the pleasure-seekers of Ephesus. But never did that imposing place witness so memorable an assembly as now knelt upon the shore under the open sky.

The address of Paul began with a touching review of his faithful ministry among them: "Ye know how I was with you, in all humility and with many tears; how I taught you publicly and from house to house; how I kept nothing back, but declared unto you the whole counsel of God." Then a brief reference to the future: "I go bound in the spirit unto Jerusalem, not knowing the things that shall befall me there, save that the Holy Ghost witnesseth in every city, saying that bonds and afflictions abide me. But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God."

Five years later we shall see him still

PAUL'S CAMPAIGNS

confronting the future with unfaltering faith and courage, saying, "Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus."

Ten years later still we shall find him in the Mammertine jail, listening for the foot-fall of his executioner and saying, "I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing."

Wonderful faith! Splendid courage! Noble ambition; to "finish his course with joy"!

He then, in his address, turned from himself to the needs of his Christian friends. Hear his ominous words: "I know this, that after my departing shall grievous

PAUL'S CAMPAIGNS

wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them." Wolves! Wolves! He was not thinking of persecution. He assumed that as a matter of course; and took it for granted that the elders of Ephesus would be prepared to meet it. But wolves in sheep's clothing! Some "of your own selves"! Men in canonicals and bound by ordination vows!

Then followed a two-fold warning.

First, "take heed to yourselves!" For doubtless they were inwardly asking, like the disciples in the upper room, "Is it I?" Paul himself was not overconfident of his own strength, else why should he say, "Lest when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway"? (1 Cor. 9:26, 27.) Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall.

Second, "Take heed to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God which he hath purchased with his own blood."

PAUL'S CAMPAIGNS

Observe, he does not say, "Make food for the flock," as some of us ministers would seem to interpret it. The food is adequately provided in the Word of God; our business is simply to administer it. Wherefore all true sermons are expository. The mere opinion of a surpliced clergyman is of no more value than the *ipse dixit* of other men. People come to church not to hear what the preacher has to say about the great problems of life and immortality, but to hear what God has to say through him. Our function, accordingly, is not to manufacture truth and ethics, but to feed the flock with what has been divinely provided, and to "keep nothing back," but "declare the whole counsel of God."

This two-fold admonition is followed by a recital of certain words of Christ which are recorded nowhere else in Scripture: "Remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive." Thanks to Paul for this authentic quotation. It stands as a monograph of the wonderful life of Him who came not to be

PAUL'S CAMPAIGNS

ministered unto but to minister, and marks out the path of usefulness for all who follow Him.

The meeting closed with prayer. "He kneeled down and prayed with them all." Would that the words of that prayer had been left us. Of this, however, we may be sure; it is preserved in those "golden vials of odors" with which the four-and-twenty elders minister in the services of the Heavenly City. (Rev. 5:8.)

The elders have now gathered about Paul to say farewell. They are weeping, "most of all for the words which he spake, that they should see his face no more." Farewell!

The moorings are loosed; the ship is under way. "The best of friends must part"? Nay, Paul and the elders must indeed part, but not Christ and his true friends. For has he not said, "I will not leave you; lo, I am with you *always*, even unto the end"?

"I could not live apart from Him;
I love to feel Him nigh;
And so we dwell together,
My Lord and I."

XVII

BOUND FOR JERUSALEM

ACTS 21, 22, 23:1-22

The ship on which the missionary band left Miletus made “a straight course” to the southeast, touching only for necessary supplies and for unlading at ports along the way.

AT TYRE

The first stop of any importance was at Tyre, which would probably be reached on the sixth day. Here there was a delay of a whole week, which Paul and his companions put to profitable use. The Christians there—some of them possibly dating their conversion from the time when Jesus made his foreign missionary tour in that region (Matt. 15:21)—were at once assembled to hear what their distinguished visitors had to say.

It was a blessed week of fellowship, but

PAUL'S CAMPAIGNS

most trying to Paul, who was earnestly entreated not to persist in going to Jerusalem. Tears and entreaties, however, were of no avail. Finding him immovable in his purpose, Luke says, "They all brought us on our way, with wives and children, till we were out of the city." Then, as at Miletus, "we kneeled down on the shore and prayed." Again, farewell!

AT PTOLEMAIS

The ship touched at Ptolemais (familiarly known to students of the Crusades as Acre) for a single day: just long enough to "salute the brethren" and say good-by. The rest of the journey to Cæsarea was overland, about forty miles.

AT CÆSAREA

Paul and his companions on their arrival here were met by the brethren, among whom was Philip the Evangelist, one of the original seven deacons, who had been driven out of Jerusalem thirty years before by the persecuting Jews. In his hospitable home Paul was entertained "many days." There were

PAUL'S CAMPAIGNS

four unmarried daughters in the family, who had devoted their lives to "prophesying," the word being used broadly to signify the teaching of religious truth. What an oasis in the itinerant life of the busy apostle these "many days" in a happy home must have been!

While he was there a divinely called and equipped teacher named Agabus came down from Jerusalem to warn him against his projected visit to that city. He dramatically took off Paul's girdle and bound it about his own hands and feet, saying, "So shall the Jews at Jerusalem bind the man that owneth this girdle!" Whereupon, says Luke, "He and they of that place besought him not to go." But their entreaties were of no avail. Paul answered, "What mean ye to weep and to break my heart? For I am ready not to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus." And when he would not be persuaded, they ceased, saying, "The will of the Lord be done."

So the devoted band took up their luggage and went on, like Christ himself on his last

PAUL'S CAMPAIGNS

fateful journey to Jerusalem, their faces "set steadfastly to go." They were accompanied out of Cæsarea by a bodyguard of Christians, among them an old disciple named Mnason, of whom we shall presently hear more. Little did Paul dream what a different escort he would have when he should next return to this fateful city!

AT JERUSALEM

On reaching Jerusalem the missionaries were "gladly received" by the brethren of the mother church. Paul was happily entertained in the home of the aged Mnason. He was now among the familiar scenes of his boyhood. No doubt he met many of his former Jewish friends, some of whom would recall their association with him at Gamaliel's school; others who had known him officially in the Sanhedrin in what they would have called his palmier days.

On the morrow after his arrival a meeting of the "official board" of the church was called, at which James the pastor and his elders were "all present." Paul told them the story of his missionary journeys thus

PAUL'S CAMPAIGNS

far and of their rich ingathering of souls. But these Jewish Christians were in no mood to rejoice with him. There was trouble in the air.

“Thou seest, brother,” said James, “how many among us are zealous for the Jewish law. It is rumored that thou hast been teaching the Gentile converts that it is not necessary for them to observe that law. When thy presence in the city is spread abroad, take heed! We have this to suggest: here are four men who are discharging a vow: go up to the Temple, remain with these votaries during the ceremonial rites and pay their charges. This will disarm criticism and our people will have naught against thee.”

Inasmuch as no sacrifice of principle was involved in the proposed concession, Paul agreed to it. This was in pursuance of his policy of “being all things to all men, that he might by all means save some.” (1 Cor. 9:22.) The line, however, was always drawn at the boundaries of right and wrong.

But in this case his seemingly harmless compromise did not accomplish the desired

PAUL'S CAMPAIGNS

end. It chanced that certain Jews of Ephesus, who had come up to Pentecost, saw Paul in the Temple and immediately raised the cry, "Men of Israel, help! Here is that apostate who has been preaching against us!" Presently the whole city was in an uproar and Paul was faring ill at the hands of a bloodthirsty mob.

The captain of the Roman garrison which was stationed at the Castle of Antonia near by, hearing the tumult, came at double-quick with a troop of six hundred men. Paul was rescued, bound with chains to a soldier on either hand, and carried away to the castle. As he was being taken up the outer stairway he explained to Captain Lysias who he was and desired permission to address the mob. This was granted; and he proceeded to tell the oft-repeated story of his conversion. All went well until he referred to his commission, "I will send thee far hence unto the Gentiles." That was like a spark to tinder. "Away with him! Away with such a fellow from the earth! It is not fit that he should live!"

He was hurried into the castle, and a com-

PAUL'S CAMPAIGNS

mand was given that he should be examined by scourging. But when Paul remarked that he was a Roman citizen, the captain not only desisted from the proposed scourging but gave orders that his prisoner should be loosed from his bonds. Thus it appears that Paul, who was always ready to turn the other cheek when anything was to be gained by doing so, was ready also on occasion to stand upon his rights.

The next morning, on being haled to trial before the Sanhedrin, he began his defence by saying, "Men and brethren, I have lived in all good conscience before God until this day." That was as far as he was permitted to go. The high priest, who was none other than the sensual and corrupt Ananias, commanded him to be smitten on the mouth. Paul, not knowing in the confusion who had given this command, retorted, "God shall smite thee, thou whited wall!" On being reprov'd for thus speaking of God's anointed, he made a suitable explanation and apology.

As Paul was then proceeding with his defence he perceived that certain of the Jews

PAUL'S CAMPAIGNS

who were present sympathized with him in his affirmation of the resurrection of the dead: and, knowing that this was a bone of contention between the Sadducees and Pharisees, he executed a flank movement, so to speak, and divided his foes. Thereupon a great tumult arose. The Sadducees cried out against Paul; but the Pharisees said, "We find no evil in him. Let us take heed lest we be found fighting against God!" So back to the castle went the prisoner at the bar.

The next day a conspiracy was framed up against Paul. There were forty Jews—as zealously bent on evil as were Ali Baba and his forty thieves—who bound themselves by a solemn vow to kill him. It chanced, however, that Paul's nephew got wind of the matter and informed Lysias of it. The captain, fortunately, was not a man to countenance this sort of thing. At nine o'clock that night the sound of horses' hoofs was heard in the open court of the castle. The prisoner was brought out and placed in the charge of a military escort of five hundred men, who were charged to take him to Cæsa-

PAUL'S CAMPAIGNS

rea and deliver him safely to the Roman Governor in that city.

So ended Paul's visit to Jerusalem. Was it a failure? No man fails who follows the pillar of cloud. Our success is never to be measured by visible results, but by faithfulness in the discharge of whatever duty may be assigned to us. What said Luther when warned not to attend the Diet of Worms? "I would go, at my Lord's command, though the road to Worms were lined with devils as thick as the tiles on the housetops along the way."

This is to quit one's self like a man!

XVIII

AT CÆSAREA

ACTS 23: 23-35; 24; 25; 26

On reaching Cæsarea the Roman troop that had been charged with the safe conduct of Paul delivered him over to Felix the Governor, with the letter of Captain Lysias, as follows:

“Claudius Lysias unto the most excellent Governor Felix sendeth greeting. This man was taken of the Jews, and should have been killed of them: then came I with an army and rescued him, having understood that he was a Roman. And when I would have known the cause wherefore they accused him, I brought him forth into their Council. There I perceived him to be accused of questions of their Law, but to have nothing laid to his charge worthy of death or of bonds. And when it was told me how that the Jews

PAUL'S CAMPAIGNS

laid wait for the man, I sent straightway to thee, and gave commandment to his accusers also to say before thee what they had against him. Farewell."

It was only twelve days since Paul had left Cæsarea, despite all forebodings and warnings; and what a tragic return was this! He was then an honored guest of the brethren; now he is bound with chains and held as a prisoner in the Judgment Hall.

The religious leaders at Jerusalem, gnashing their teeth at his escape, made haste to follow him. It was a journey of seventy miles; but none too far for Ananias the priest, whose ears were still tingling with Paul's "thou whited wall"; nor for others of the Jews whose hearts were full of bitterness against him. They brought with them a Roman barrister, named Tertullus, that the case might be suitably conducted at a Roman Court.

THE TRIAL BEFORE FELIX

The counsel for the prosecution began with the usual flattery of the court, and then

PAUL'S CAMPAIGNS

presented the indictment, which was in three counts: *First*, the prisoner was a disturber of the peace; *second*, he was a ringleader of the Nazarene sect; *third*, he was guilty of sacrilege in profaning the Temple of the Jews.

Paul entered a plea of not guilty under all but the second of these charges, affirming that there was no proof to sustain them.

An acquittal was in order, for lack of evidence against the prisoner; but Felix was not the sort of magistrate to decide a case upon its merits. A slave by birth, a freedman by happy circumstances, an office-holder by imperial favor, a past-master in all notorious vices, he postponed his decision ostensibly until Captain Lysias should arrive with the necessary proofs, but really in the hope that Paul's friends would buy him off.

THE PRISONER ON EXHIBITION

Now it chanced that Felix had a most beautiful and graceless paramour, named Drusilla, whose curiosity was aroused by what she had learned of the eloquent Jew; so that she must needs hear him. He was

PAUL'S CAMPAIGNS

summoned, accordingly, and invited to speak. A stranger audience had never assembled there; the Governor, his charming drab and the court favorites in rich apparel. No buttered words of compliment fell from the preacher's lips that day. This man with a chain on either wrist spoke straight as a bolt of lightning to the sinful hearts of his hearers. "Righteousness, temperance, judgment to come"! Well might Paul tremble for his temerity! It is not Paul, however, but Felix who trembles! He and the little Jew have changed places. The Governor stands a shaking prisoner at the Judgment Bar of God! But his fear is only momentary; a glance at Drusilla the enchantress dispels it. Farewell, opportunity! "Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season I will call for thee."

The "convenient season" never came.

It is a true saying, "Time and tide wait for no man." Paul languished two years in the guard-house, while Felix continued to take his pleasure at the pace that kills. Then, being removed from office, he left his prisoner bound "to please the Jews."

PAUL'S CAMPAIGNS

THE TRIAL BEFORE FESTUS

The next Governor was a different sort of man. In Josephus' life of him he speaks of Festus as "a just and efficient ruler." He had scarcely entered on his office before there came a request that Paul might be sent back to Jerusalem for trial before the Sanhedrin. A fine proceeding that would have been! Of course Festus refused; but he invited the rabbis to come down to Cæsarea and conclude the case.

A few days later they were on hand; and court was opened with Festus on the bench. The charge was presented with "many and grievous complaints"; to all of which the prisoner entered his former plea of not guilty. And unfortunately for his accusers they had still no evidence against him. The Governor was disposed to favor the Jews if it could be done without violating the law; wherefore he asked Paul if he had any objection to the transfer of his case to Jerusalem that he might "there be judged of these things."

Paul's forbearance had now reached its

PAUL'S CAMPAIGNS

limit. He was weary of being beaten to and fro by petty magistrates in provincial courts. Thus far he had submitted without a murmur; but the time had come to stand upon his personal rights. If anybody has estimated the stature of this man at five feet two, let him measure him now! "I have done no wrong; I have spent a weary term in your guard-house: I have suffered no end of indignities at your hands. I will not go up to Jerusalem! I am a Roman citizen! I appeal to Cæsar!"

After a brief conference with his counsellors as to the prisoner's right of appeal, there being no alternative the decision was given in legal form: "To Cæsar thou hast appealed; to Cæsar shalt thou go."

The court adjourned, and Paul went back to prison to await the sailing of a government ship which was to convey other prisoners also to the imperial city. But his heart was singing; he was going to Rome! Not indeed as he had hoped, free to declare the unsearchable riches of Christ; but he was going to Rome; and he was going in the way divinely marked out for him.

PAUL'S CAMPAIGNS

THE PRISONER AGAIN ON EXHIBITION

It happened that, while Paul was awaiting his transfer, Agrippa, the King of Trachonitis, came down to Cæsarea to felicitate Festus on his accession to office; and his sister Bernice, a famous and malodorous beauty, came with him. They had heard much of the eloquent Jew and expressed a desire to hear him.

A brilliant company was assembled in the Pretorian Hall when the prisoner was brought in. Being "permitted to speak for himself," he began with the story of his early life, leading up rapidly to his singular conversion on the Damascus highway and to his unwavering conviction that the crucified Jesus was the long-looked-for Messiah of the Jews. At this point Festus, unable to restrain his indignation, cried: "Paul, thou art beside thyself; much learning doth make thee mad!" "I am not mad, most noble Festus," was the prisoner's calm rejoinder, "but speak forth the words of truth and soberness." Then turning to the royal guest, himself a Jew, he appealed to his an-

PAUL'S CAMPAIGNS

cestral faith: "King Agrippa, believest thou the prophets? I know that thou believest!" Paul was now on familiar ground. He was acquainted with the prophets from Moses to Malachi; and knew how they all pointed to Jesus as the Christ. But Agrippa was in no mood to be thus cornered and convinced against his will. His answer was a scornful jest, "Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian!" Whereupon Paul, with the pathos of an infinite longing in his voice, emphasized by the clanking of the chains upon his wrists, made courteous reply, "I would to God that not only thou, but also all that hear me this day, were both 'almost' and altogether such as I am—except these bonds."

The hearing is over. The prisoner is returned to the guard-house. In a corner of the Pretorian Hall a group of his auditors are saying, "This man hath done nothing worthy of death or even of bonds." Agrippa, whose sense of justice will not down, observes to Festus, "This man might have been set at liberty if he had not appealed unto Cæsar." But the decree of the

PAUL'S CAMPAIGNS

court is irrevocable. To Cæsar he must go.

In his lonely cell the prisoner awaits the course of events. He is troubled by no misgivings. God leads the way and his face is set steadfastly to go. His only ambition is to finish his course with joy.

XIX

PAUL'S LAST VOYAGE

ACTS 27; 28: 1-14

The ship was swinging at anchor in the harbor of Cæsarea, when a favorable wind sprang up. Paul with the other prisoners was at once taken aboard in the custody of a centurion named Julius, a man of marked courtesy, who was charged with their safe conduct to Rome.

THE LOG OF THE VOYAGE

(Kept by Luke the Physician, a Companion of Paul.)

Aug. 21, A. D. 60. Set sail due north in a favorable breeze with two hundred and seventy-six souls aboard.

Aug. 22. Touched at Sidon. Paul permitted to go ashore and interview his friends. Thence in a northwesterly course for a time, after which due west. Delayed by contrary winds.

PAUL'S CAMPAIGNS

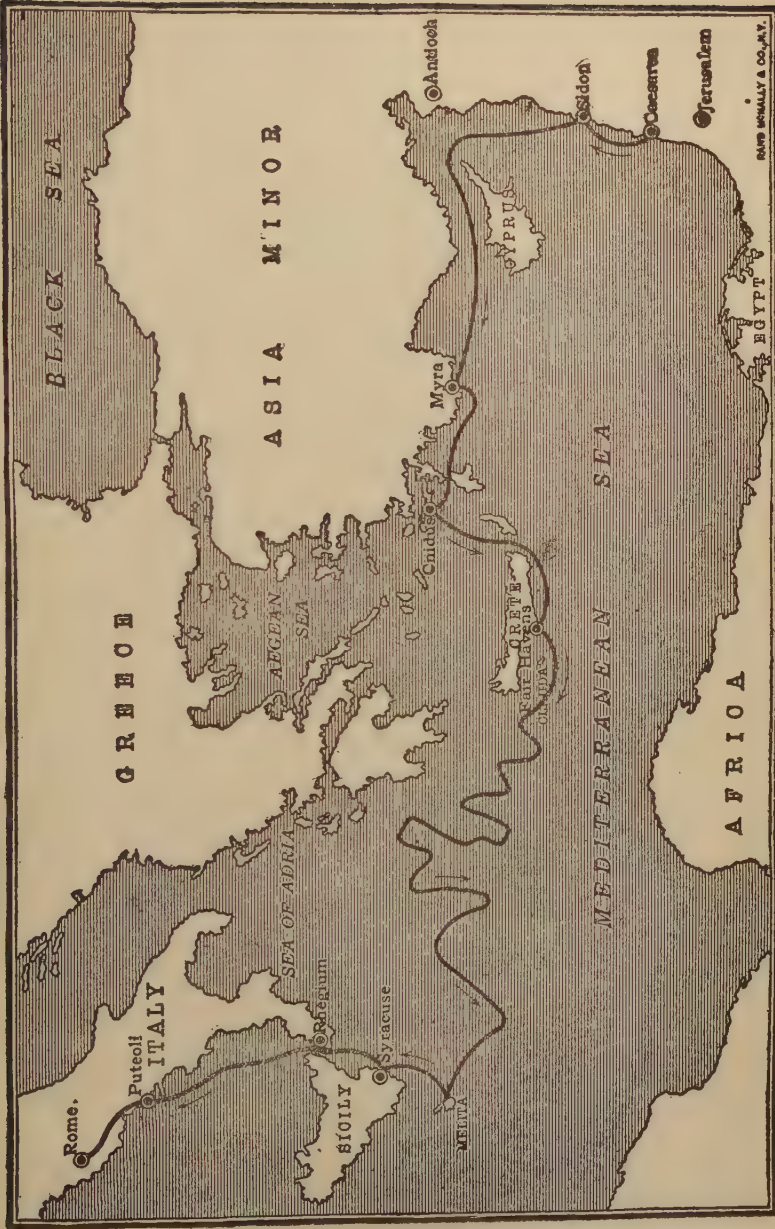
Aug. 29. Reached Myra, where we were transferred to an Alexandrian corn-ship making for Rome. Our quarters in the hold uncomfortable; but the Lord was with us. Winds rising; progress slow.

Sept. 11. Touched at Cnidus, our last Asiatic port. Desired to sail due west, but forced southward by rising adverse winds.

Sept. 26. Took refuge in Fair Havens in the island of Crete, an ill-sheltered port. Lay here many days, waiting for favorable weather. All hope of reaching Rome before winter now given up. The storm abating for a while, the captain was disposed to make for Phenice, a safe and commodious harbor a few miles further on. Paul warned him vainly against doing so. What could a landsman like him know about navigation or weather signs?

Oct. 18. Set sail from Fair Havens in a treacherous south wind. Had scarcely rounded the cape before there were ominous signs of a storm. Euroclydon, the sailor's terror, was sweeping down from the hills! There was scarcely time to take in sail before it overtook us. The second day out the

CHART OF PAUL'S LAST VOYAGE



PAUL'S CAMPAIGNS

vessel struck a leak and was undergirt with cables. On the third day the cargo was thrown over: followed the next day by all dispensable furniture and other equipments. Darkness for many days; lost our bearings. Hope abandoned. Then Paul to the rescue! He bade the sailors be of good cheer, because an angel of the Lord had appeared to him in a vision saying that he himself was to reach Rome safely and that there would be "no loss of life" among the ship's crew and passengers. Thereupon courage revived; but the typhoon swept on.

Nov. 1. Wrecked on the coast of Malta. We were wakened at midnight by the lookout calling "Land ahead!" Soundings were taken; twenty fathoms, then fifteen. Cast anchor and awaited the break of day. The crew intending to take possession of the boats, Paul interposed, warning the captain that unless they remained all would be lost. His advice was taken; the ropes were cut, setting the boats adrift. Paul, the landsman, was now in practical command of the ship. After long fasting all partook of food. In the morning, finding ourselves at

PAUL'S CAMPAIGNS

the entrance of a bay, it was resolved to run in. The ship went aground and was at the mercy of the pounding breakers. The soldiers, being answerable with their lives for the prisoners, would have killed them to prevent their escape; but the centurion in charge forbade it. Each for himself, now! Many, leaping out, swam ashore. Others betook themselves to boards and broken pieces of the ship. So it came to pass that all escaped safe to land.

The island proved to be Malta. The barbarous inhabitants received us kindly. A fire was kindled on the shore. Out of the fagots crept a viper which fastened on Paul's hand. The natives expected him to fall dead; but he shook it off and received no harm. Thereupon they whispered among themselves, "He is a god!"

The fury of the simoon was now spent; but we remained three months in the island waiting for the *Castor and Pollux*, a corn-ship which lay weather-bound in the harbor, to take us off.

Feb. 8, A. D. 61. Sailed on the *Castor and Pollux*.

PAUL'S CAMPAIGNS

Feb. 9. Touched at Syracuse: waited three days for a more favorable wind.

Feb. 13. Made eighty miles in a southerly breeze and touched at Rhegium. One day.

Feb. 14. Made Puteoli, the chief port of Italy, and disembarked. Met some of the brethren. Tarried seven days. Then on, afoot, toward Rome, a distance of a hundred and forty miles.

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So runs the Log of this eventful voyage, consuming half a year. Its one outstanding lesson is the serene faith of Paul. While the storm was raging he slept soundly on three pillows; namely, the wisdom and power and goodness of God.

Ridge of the mountain wave, lower thy crest!
Wail of Euroclydon, be thou at rest!
Sorrow can never be, darkness must fly,
When saith the Light of light, "Peace, it is I!"

Observe, First, Paul "believed God." Having certain promises, he took them at their face value. Thus it is written, "He that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is the rewarder of them that diligently seek him."

PAUL'S CAMPAIGNS

Second, he “practised the divine presence.” On the darkest night of the simoon he had a most hopeful vision of which he says, “The Lord stood by me.” It is always so with those who live on speaking terms with God.

Third, his faith was buttressed by common sense. Notwithstanding his confidence that all aboard were to be saved, he assured the captain that if the crew was not prevented from seizing the boats all would be lost. The divine sovereignty does not interfere with the freedom of the human will.

Fourth, his assurance was coupled with praise. He “said grace” over the frugal meal on the tossing ship. During all those frightful “fourteen days in Adria” he never lost confidence in the Lord’s faithfulness. It is thus that God giveth his beloved songs in the night.

It is in this spirit that Paul writes to his Philippian friends: “Rejoice in the Lord alway: and again I say, Rejoice. . . . Be careful for nothing; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God.”

XX

AT ROME

ACTS 28 : 15-31

It was early spring of the year 61 when the *Castor and Pollux* came sailing up through the beautiful Bay of Naples to Puteoli. The crew and passengers debarked; and presently Paul and his fellow-prisoners set out for their destination along Appia Via. At villages on the way Paul was met by many brethren; wherefore, he says, "we thanked God and took courage." So at length he reached Rome, a prisoner in bonds.

His life-long dream was realized at last: "I must see Rome!" But why this consuming desire?

Rome was well worth seeing, no doubt, with its palaces and temples, its Forum and Colosseum and triumphal arches. "See Rome and die," was one of the familiar proverbs of those days. It was the metrop-

PAUL'S CAMPAIGNS

olis of the world; all great enterprises centered there. No tourist, even nowadays, is content until, with "Baedeker" in hand, he visits Rome; though its ancient splendors are now reduced to a lamentable mass of ruins.

But Paul's desire reached further and went deeper than this. Though a great traveller, he had no thought of sight-seeing. As an "ambassador of Christ" he longed to witness far and wide for him. To stand in the Forum and preach the gospel there at the confluence of the nations would be to send his voice ringing to the uttermost parts of the earth. A lofty ambition, indeed! This man was never content with mediocrity. He had "hitched his wagon to a star."

It would appear that his intention of visiting Rome was conceived at the very beginning of his Christian life.

The dream of his boyhood had been to become a rabbi. With that in view he left his home in Tarsus and studied in the University of Jerusalem, at the feet of the learned Gamaliel, who was known as "the Flower of the Law." Soon after his graduation with

PAUL'S CAMPAIGNS

high honors he was chosen a member of the Sanhedrin, which was the Supreme Court of the Jews. A splendid outlook was before him. Presently he was made Chief Inquisitor of that distinguished body, and was placed under a special commission to root out "the heresy of the Nazarenes." It was while thus engaged that he made his notable journey to Damascus "breathing out slaughter" against the followers of Christ.

Then came the revolutionary change. In the light that shone from heaven, "above the brightness of the sun," his plans and purposes were instantly turned upside down. He fell to the earth a rabbi; he rose up a Christian. Hearing a voice say, "I am Jesus," his immediate answer was, "What wilt thou have me to do?" The reply was, "I will send thee far hence unto the Gentiles"; in other words, to all people. That meant sooner or later to Rome; for Rome was *colluvies gentium*, the center of the civilized world of those days.

From that time forward he was unreservedly committed to the service of Christ. Forsaken by former friends, with all ave-

PAUL'S CAMPAIGNS

nues of preferment blocked up, he hewed to the line which had been divinely marked out for him. Listen to this: "I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord; . . . that I may know him and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of his sufferings. . . . I count not myself to have apprehended; but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus."

Did the Lord approve of his desire to see Rome? Paul affirms that his purpose was "according to the will of God." He says repeatedly that "the Lord stood by him." If ever there was a Christian who felt himself a living part of the divine plan and desired, above all, to hold himself in line with the divine will, it was this man.

On the day when he first saw Jesus he put himself so wholly and implicitly under his control that looking back, years afterward, he could say, "I have not been disobedient unto the heavenly vision." His Lord's pur-

PAUL'S CAMPAIGNS

pose was his ultimate goal, and he followed it as a sailor heeds the polar star. Once when he essayed to go into Bithynia he desisted, as he says, because "the Spirit suffered him not." In writing to the Christians at Rome he says, "Oftentimes I purposed to come unto you, and was hindered." (Rom. 1:13.) Nevertheless he was not discouraged. He reckoned Rome as a necessary factor in the finishing of his course.

He never for a moment gave up his purpose and expectation. It was nineteen years after his conversion, at the conclusion of his evangelistic campaign in Ephesus when the converts made a great bonfire of their cabalistic books, that he "purposed in spirit" to extend his campaign through Macedonia and Achaia and thence to Jerusalem, saying, "After that, I must see Rome!"

Two years subsequently he wrote his Epistle to the Romans, reassuring them of his purpose to visit them. He begins by saying, "God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit in the gospel of his Son, that without ceasing I make mention of you always in my

PAUL'S CAMPAIGNS

prayers; making request, if by any means now at length I might have a prosperous journey by the will of God to come unto you. For I long to see you, that I may impart unto you some spiritual gifts, to the end ye may be established; that is, that I may be comforted together with you by the mutual faith both of you and me." And in closing he pathetically urges them to unite their prayers with his to that end: "I beseech you, brethren, for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake and for the love of the Spirit, that ye strive together with me in your prayers, that I may be delivered from them that do not believe, that I may come to you with joy by the will of God."

But he was strangely hindered in the accomplishment of his desire. To use his own words, "I oftentimes purposed, and was hindered hitherto." And again, "Having a great desire these many years to come unto you."

In the year 47 he set out on a missionary journey with his face toward the west. He probably hoped then to reach the Imperial City; but, having preached in many places,

PAUL'S CAMPAIGNS

he came to Cilicia and was there constrained to turn back.

In the year 50 he set out again toward the west. On this occasion he crossed the Hellespont and canvassed many of the important cities of Europe until he reached Corinth; and again he was obliged to turn back.

In the year 53 he started on his third missionary journey in the direction of Rome. It was now sixteen years since his conversion, and he was apparently no nearer the fulfilment of his heart's desire. Again he reached Corinth; but there were imperative reasons for his being at Jerusalem in time for the Feast of Pentecost; wherefore once more he retraced his steps.

But "he that believeth shall not make haste." Paul's patience of hope was sure to be rewarded. He could afford to wait, because, as he says, he "believed God."

At length his desire was realized, but in a singular way. "Man proposes; God disposes." He reached Rome a prisoner in bonds. At once he was taken to the Pretorian Camp; where, though in close custody

PAUL'S CAMPAIGNS

for two years, he was permitted to see his friends. He conferred with the Jews by appointment, seeking in vain to persuade them that "this Jesus is the Christ." He held frequent converse with the Christians of the Roman church, and received many visitors who desired to know about "The Way."

Time passed, and Paul was again cast into prison: this time in the Mammertine jail. But "stone walls do not a prison make nor iron bars a cage." He was not idle in that noisome place: and "the word of God is not bound." Some of Paul's most important letters were written there. Old and feeble, he could not be put down. His irrepressible zeal in the service of his Lord reminds us of what an old poet says:

"Tumble me down, and I will sit
Exultant on my ruins yet!"

His keen soul caught the presentiment of the coming end, his ear the footfall of the executioner ringing down the corridor of the jail. But he was not terrified. "I am now ready to be offered and the time of my departure is at hand," he wrote to Timothy,

PAUL'S CAMPAIGNS

his spiritual son and successor in the pastorate of the Ephesian church. "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day. Grace be with you. Amen."

They led him to the headsman's block, outside the walls. A blow of the gleaming axe; and the great apostle was at home with God.

What is the lesson?

The splendor of a great ambition.

Paul was not content with anything less than the noblest and best. For one thing, he wanted to make the most of himself; and Rome was needed for the rounding out of his life.

I like the prayer of the humble cobbler who used to ask every day, "Lord, give me a good opinion of myself"; but such a prayer is vain without something worth while behind it.

This is a responsibility which ought to rest upon the conscience of every one. The

PAUL'S CAMPAIGNS

world would be a different world but for its "mute inglorious Miltons." The Church would long ago have conquered the world were it not that so many are satisfied with being minimum Christians, inactive and indifferent, imbedded like flies in amber. Who shall number the potential Lincolns who, for lack of ambition, are rail-splitters all their lives? Wherefore, "stir up the gift that is in thee." There is fire enough in the embers of every Christian life if only it were fanned into a flame. No minister is at liberty to be satisfied with a small parish if his gifts and calling are adequate to the responsibilities of a larger one. Every man is under bonds to be somebody, not for the sake of getting into the limelight but in order that he may make his life tell. Our light was not kindled to be hid under a bushel, but to shine so that "all that are in the house" may take knowledge of it.

But Paul was thinking less of being somebody than of doing something for somebody. The chain on his right hand bound him to Christ. With what joyous pride he speaks of himself as "the prisoner of Christ!"

PAUL'S CAMPAIGNS

There was no reserve in his consecration: "The love of Christ constraineth me!" But his service to Christ was expressed in ministry to others; as Christ himself had said, "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren ye have done it unto Me."

The same chain that bound Paul to his Lord bound him to one of the Roman guards; and he preached the Gospel to that man. Not a few of his spiritual children were thus begotten in his bonds. "They that are of Cæsar's household salute you." No pent-up Utica confined his influence. The reason why he longed to visit Rome was because it was a coign of vantage from which to sound forth the riches of grace. There were two millions of people there, all immortal souls! From there he must send his message, "This Jesus is the Christ," ringing through the world and down the ages. Nothing less would satisfy him. To reach Rome would thus be to finish his course with joy.

The world has been moving since Paul came sailing into Puteoli on the "*Castor and Pollux*." Not long ago I followed in his

PAUL'S CAMPAIGNS

very footsteps along the Appian Way. The dusk was falling; the shadows of the Falerian Hills lay over the plain, and in the distance the dome of St. Peter's was dimly outlined against the sky. Nero no longer dwelt in his blood-stained quarters on the Palatine. In the cottages by the roadside were people sitting in vine-covered porches with none to molest or make them afraid. The Gospel has not been shining for naught these nineteen hundred years. And whatever has been accomplished for the betterment of the world has been through the instrumentality of men who like Paul were constrained to service "by the will of God."

Wherefore let us be our best and do our utmost for Him who has redeemed us by his precious blood. We are all too easily satisfied. The words with which William Carey closed his great sermon inaugurating the modern campaign of Missions strike an inspiring note for all earnest souls: "*Let us undertake great things for God, and expect great things from him.*"

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